MOONSHINE

THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

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MOONSHINE

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By

THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

Author of "The Wasp," "The Master of the Moosehorn,"
"The Islands of Adventure"

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

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CHAPTER I

MAY DAY ON FISHER CREEK

OLD Pod Reward had lived on Fisher Creek all his life and had never entertained so much as a suspicion of what he was missing. And what had he missed, I wonder? Nothing that he knew anything about, certainly. Youth had been his, and the physical attributes of youth for an unusually long term of years. Love had been his, as he understood it, several times. He had known blind rage now and then, a little foolish pride, and much peace. He had felt the spur of ambition in keeping with his vision more than once, and the exhilaration of success according to his lights. He had felt hunger and had eaten, cold and had warmed himself. He had felt fear until his scalp tingled. No craving of his had ever gone long unassuaged. As he often said, with a pardonable smirk of self-satisfied superiority, "I ain't wanted nothin' I ain't took." We should envy him rather than pity him—but we are free to despise him. He had no vision beyond the sight of his physical eye, no aspiration beyond the climbing power of his muscular legs and the grasp of his hard hands. We who set out for stars, at the risk of a crash to the cellar, may

as well keep our opinions of old Pod Reward to ourselves.

Pod prided himself on having nothing to do with the world and civilization. This had been one of his brags all his life, and the older he grew the more garrulously did he pride himself on his exclusiveness. Did he know what he was talking about? Well, I cal'late he did. Hadn't he been to Plaster Rock more than a hundred times, to sell and buy, and once spent three days in a town on the big river? And hadn't he met a "sport" from New York, with a folding canvas bath, who didn't know how to light a fire in the rain? He knew, you bet! —and Fisher Creek was good enough for him, and all he asked of the world was to be let alone.

When old Pod Reward, the earthly but unworldly man, opened his eyes at six o'clock on the morning of May Day of this year of conference and confusion, nineteen-nineteen, he felt as spry as if his age was twenty-five instead of seventy-five, and as secure as a genuine rock. He felt no premonition of disturbance. He got out of his blankets and lit the fire in his rusty stove. Had he felt any warning of the trouble that was hatching for him at that very moment, out in the great world, I think he would have returned to his blankets and remained in them.

Ignorant and self-satisfied as ever, old Reward boiled his kettle, fried bacon, steeped tea and breakfasted with his usual sharp appetite and keen appreciation of his own cooking. He lit his pipe then and set briskly to work at hiding what little was left in the shack in the way of provisions under the floor under his bunk. From a hiding-place in the roof he produced a flat leather

wallet, which he stowed away inside his innermost shirt. He went out, padlocked the door, tucked the key under an edge of a chopping block, shouldered an axe, a pole and two paddles and went down to the bank where his canoe lay among the alders.

Pod Reward and his canoe had not been gone twenty minutes before Noel Sabatis arrived at the door of the shack and regarded the chain and big padlock on the door with a cynical and derisive smile.

" Pod one darn ol' fool," said Noel.

He went around to one of the low windows and with his axe prized it out of the wall, frame and all. By this way he entered with difficulty ; and after examining the pantry shelves and finding them bare he went straight to the bunk, raised two short sections of poles from the floor beneath it and helped himself, in moderation, to sugar and tobacco. He wriggled through the small square of the window again—this time with the loss of a trouser button—and replaced the frame behind him.

" Pod one darn mean ol' cuss," he said.

In the meantime, old Pod Reward in his light canoe continued to glide down the swollen stream at a racing pace, bound for Plaster Rock. There he would buy bacon, beans, flour, molasses, prunes and all the other things that make proud the heart of man through the medium of the stomach. There he would flash his fat wallet at the store-keeper and the hotel-keeper, and smoke several seven-cent cigars and air his convictions on life in general. He would sleep that night at the hotel—damn the expense !—and set out very early next morning on the homeward up-river journey. So strong was the

current that he covered the eight miles of Fisher Creek and the ten miles of Tobique Water in less than four hours and arrived at Plaster Rock before eleven o'clock. He went straight to Dan Whalen's store.

Dan Whalen was a postmaster as well as a store-keeper; and when he saw old Pod Reward his eyes brightened. As he had neither seen nor heard of Mr. Reward since last October, one would naturally suppose that this brightening of the eyes was an expression of welcome. Not at all. It was due entirely to excitement of curiosity. Without a word of greeting to the ancient of Fisher Creek, Whalen went to the post-office end of his establishment, sorted through a dusty pigeon-hole and produced two letters. With these in his hand he approached Pod Reward.

"How do, Pod," he said.

"How do," returned Pod.

"Who d'ye cal'late Mister P. Reward, Fisher Crick, might be?"

"Who d'ye cal'late Dan Whalen, Plaster Rock, might be?"

"Here, take yer letter—and there ain't no call to be sassy about it. I'm postmaster here. I gotter to hand letters to the right parties; and when ye sass me back, ye're sassin' the government."

A letter! It was twenty years since Pod had received a letter. He was shaken for a moment, but quickly recovered his air of assurance.

"Hand her here," he said.

"Not so quick. Did ye ever hear tell of Poddington Reward, Esquire?"

"Did ye ever hear tell of Daniel Whalen, store-keeper?"

" Answer a civil question ! "

" That's my name, and ye know it. Hand over my letters, Mister Dan Postmaster, or ye'll wish ye hadn't begged the job away from old Widow Smith. Jumpin' Chrismus ! I've *et* bigger an' better men nor you ! "

" Now there ain't no call for ye to get mad, Pod," returned Whalen, in a new and less artificial tone of voice. " Ain't it part of my duty, as postmaster, to make sure that ye're the man the letters is for ? Here ye are, Pod. Two letters. One from Noo York *and* t'other from England."

Pod took the envelopes into his knotty hands and stared at them for several seconds in silence. Two letters ! And letters have to be read—and Pod's education had been so shockingly neglected in the ancient days of his youth that the only thing he could read was his own name. And there stood Dan Whalen, all blown up with his official importance, staring at him with eyes like half-inch augers. For the honour of Fisher Creek he pulled himself together and stuffed the letters into the front of his shirt.

" Ain't ye goin' to read 'em ? " asked Mr. Whalen.

" That's as may be," retorted the old man. " Ye've done yer duty as postmaster, anyhow, so there ain't no call for ye to fret."

Mr. Whalen then applied to Pod the methods by which he had obtained the post office. If Pod Reward had an admirer, Dan Whalen was that admirer. Dan had often said to his wife that if he thought he would be as good a man at fifty as Pod was at seventy-five he would ask nothing more of life. As for Pod's great past—why, it was the only history Dan considered worth knowing. Wasn't Pod the greatest chopper that country had ever

known ? Sure thing ! And the slickest man in a fight, with both hands and feet ? And fighting was fighting in those days. His youthful ambition had been to grow up to be just such a man as Pod Reward ; and the discovery that he had not been born to such a great and heroic way of life had nearly broken his heart. So he had learnt to read and write, and lived in the settlements, because he wasn't fit for anything better. And so on, and so on, until that vain old man pulled out the two letters and said, casually, " My eyesight ain't what it uster be for this here short-distance work, Dan, so if ye'll jist read out these here letters to me I'll be obleged."

" Sure, Pod, if ye say so," returned Mr. Whalen.

He opened the New York letter first.

" I'm durned if it ain't printed on a type-writin' machine ! " he exclaimed. " An' printed right purty too—as purty as I ever see."

He seated himself on a keg of nails and read as follows :

" My dear Father,—I am your son, James. Perhaps you have wondered what had become of me since that morning in May forty years ago when I got up early and beat it, taking five dollars of your money and a watch that step-mother said was gold but wasn't. I was twelve years old then and starvation poor, with you cussing me out of doors and step-mother cussing me indoors—but now I am fifty and rich. When people cuss me now they don't do it so that I can hear. I often think of those times, now that I know for sure there is no danger of ever returning to them. If you are still alive—and if you are, then I don't know what bullets and buckshot are made for—you must be mighty badly warped. I sometimes think I should enjoy nothing

better than blowing in on you and that step-mother you wished on to me, and knocking you both about the way you two used to knock me about. I have children of my own now, and they are as good in temper and instinct as the average, as far as I can see—and perhaps a little better. I have watched them pretty close, believe me, fearing that one or other of them might show something of their paternal grandfather. But I guess they are safe, praise the Lord!—and thanks to their mother, and thanks a little bit to me. You wouldn't be flattered, father, if you knew how I have worked all my life to train your ignorant, cruel, suspicious, violent, sly and entirely rotten nature out of myself. I managed it, having more mother in me than father. I have been as successful in business as in more important things, thanks to hard work and honesty. Honesty! Think of that, you who weren't above robbing an Indian's rabbit snares. I am not a millionaire, but I have more than we need now by fifteen thousand dollars a year—and I have done it all on salary. I have worked for one firm for twenty-five years. If you are still of this world, please answer this, for I want to talk to you about your family. Since learning something of the world I have often wondered what sort of people you had for ancestors—because you are the lowest thing in human shape I have ever encountered. But perhaps you have reformed? If so, please accept my congratulations, and if five thousand dollars are of any use to you, let me know.—Your son, JAMES REWARD."

Dan Whalen lifted his glance from the letter and fixed it upon Pod, and Pod stared back at him. The post-master was the first to speak.

" Five thousand dollars—just for the askin' for it," he said.

The old man from Fisher Creek did not answer. He could not think of anything to say that would be at all appropriate to the occasion. All he could think of was that his son James, the boy of twelve whom he and his second wife had treated in a way which the S.P.C.A. defends horses and dogs against, was alive and rich.

That he was alive was even more of a wonder than that he was rich. Pod thought very hard, in a confused way, of the son for whom he had not spared a dozen thoughts, or one least pang of anxiety, in forty years.

" Five thousand dollars," repeated the postmaster. " D'ye believe it ? D'ye cal'late he has it ?—and would he send it to you if he had ? It don't seem reasonable to me, considerin' everything."

" He means what he says," returned Pod. " If that there letter was wrote by him, then ye kin swear to every word of it. His mother was like that—a Scott she was, from acrost the height-o'-land. Queer folks."

" What ye better do, Pod, is write him back a real religious sort of letter, sayin' how ye're never knowed a minute's peace of mind since he run away and that ye reformed for fair—though it went cruel hard agin' yer nature to do it—forty years ago. Tell him ye ain't cussed, nor lied, nor stole from Injun or white, nor cheated, nor trapped beaver, nor killed moose out of season, nor drunk rum, nor beat up nobody smaller nor yerself, man or woman, for forty year. Ye got to lie, so lie good—and maybe he'll send ye the five thousand dollars."

" I don't want his money," said Pod. " I got all the

money I need. All I want's to be left alone. If I lay low and don't answer that there letter he'll cal'late I'm dead; but if I tell him to send along the five thousand he'll fetch it in himself, like as not—an' I ain't darned particular about seein' him. That there is a ha'sh letter—real ha'sh—and I'm afeared he'll beat me up if ever he gits aholt of me."

Whalen saw that the old fellow from Fisher Creek meant what he said—that he was afraid of his son. He committed James Reward's address to memory, then folded the letter and gave it to Pod.

"We'll try a fall with t'other one now, and maybe ye'll like that one better," he said, running his finger under the flap of the London letter. And this is what he read.

"DEAR COUSIN PODDINGTON,—I am venturing to write to you, and to address you thus familiarly, on the strength of the distinguished memory of Major-General Sir John de la Reward, who was one of your great-grandfathers and a great-great-grandfather of mine. If you will look up your genealogical tree you will see that Sir John's eldest son, also named John, who served for many years in the navy and attained the rank of captain, married a Miss Anne Stukley, of Stukley, in Kent. The said John and Anne were my great-grandfather and great-grandmother. Your grandfather, Edward de la Reward, was the General's third son, served for a time in the army, married a Miss Poddington of Essex, lost much of his fortune in a commercial venture and emigrated to British North America in the year 1820. It was at about this date that he first wrote his name without the prefixes. But, of course, you know all this as well as I do.

From old letters I learnt that Edward had a son named Poddington, who married a Miss Mary Lunn."

Here the postmaster paused in his laborious reading and looked enquiringly at the old man from Fisher Creek.

"That's right—Molly Lunn," said Pod in a weary voice. "'Breed, she was—French an' Maliseet an' Mohawk. There's some of that mixture still on the reservation—but most of it's in jail or been hung. Molly Lunn was my mother—but it beats hell how that feller knows about it."

"I cal'late that's where ye git yer character," remarked Whalen.

He turned his attention to the letter again and continued to read.

"After much difficulty I have discovered that this worthy couple bore children, the eldest of which was named Poddington, and that the said Poddington continues to occupy the lands on Fisher Creek which his father wrested from the primeval forest. Now, my dear cousin, I come to the point. I am anxious, for sentimental reasons, to become personally acquainted with you and your immediate family. There are not many de la Rewards left in the world. As far as I know, you are the only one left of the name of your generation ; and unless you have sons living, I am the only one of my generation. I was blessed with children. My two boys served civilization and their king in this war, and the elder was killed in the vicinity of Ypres, nearly three years ago. The younger, who is not yet twenty years of age, lost his left arm during the great battle of Arras last year, and is now returned to his

studies at Oxford. If I receive a favourable reply to this, I shall visit you at Fisher Creek sometime in the course of the approaching summer. I stand in sore need of a rest and complete change of surroundings, for I have laboured under a terrific spiritual and mental strain throughout the past five years. Hoping to see you soon, my dear Poddington, believe me to be your affectionate though distant cousin, JOHN DE LA REWARD."

"What d'ye know about that!" exclaimed Mr. Whalen. "Yer affectionate cousin John de la Reward! A gentleman, or I'm a liar—and comin' to Fisher Crick to stop a while with ye and talk about Sir John and Molly Lunn. Comin' to see old Pod Reward! What d'ye know about that?"

"Nothin'," retorted Pod. "And what's more I don't believe a d—— word of it. Ye've done it, Dan Whalen, jist to fret me."

"Me!" cried the other. "Ye're mad! How would I know about all them Sir Johns and the like? I ain't interested in yer cussed family."

In that he lied, for nothing in the world excited his interest and pricked his curiosity at that moment more than the family of Pod Reward. The address of the Englishman was added to that of James Reward; and the moment Pod left the store both addresses were transferred from the unreliable tablet of his memory to the back of an old envelope.

Old Pod Reward went to the hotel, ate his dinner, smoked a cigar and said nothing. He was in a bad temper and very low in his spirits. In the afternoon he returned to Whalen's store and purchased a canoe-load of provisions. Fear of his son James had him by the

throat. He remembered the way he had treated that boy forty years ago, and chills of apprehension fingered up and down his spine. As he paid Whalen for the goods he said. " You write to Jim and tell him I'm dead and buried."

" And what about the five thousand dollars ? " asked Dan.

" I wouldn't meet that there lad on Fisher Crick for all the money this side hell ! " returned Pod, with sincerity in his voice.

The old man started up river for Fisher Creek at the first break of dawn and toiled hard at pole and paddle and tow-line throughout the long spring day. Noel Sabatis, whose shack was this side of Pod's, saw him coming and met him at the edge of the water and helped him carry the provisions to the cabin. There was no friendship between these two old fellows, but they got along fairly well together and had been partners in many a bit of backwoods knavery. Of late years Noel had clung to Pod because a meal of bacon and tea could be wheedled out of him now and then ; and Pod had stuck to Noel, feeding him when it was positively necessary, for the sake of having someone handy to whom he could brag of the cunning and valour and hardihood of his past. But Pod had nothing to say that night. He was not in a bragging mood. So preoccupied were his thoughts that he sat in silence while Noel swallowed mug after mug of tea and half-a-dozen rashers of bacon under his very nose.

CHAPTER II

MAY DAY IN NEW YORK AND LONDON

IN the great city of New York, it was also the first day of May of this extraordinary year, Mr. Robert N. Sayle awoke with a start. In an instant, in the fraction of a second, he was as wide awake as if he had not been asleep at all. A voice had called him; but, though he lay very still and hearkened very intently, his physical ear caught no accent or echo of the sound that had awakened him.

"I must have been dreaming," he said.

He sat up, then immediately uttered a low cry, pressed a hand to his side and sank back on the pillow. The pain had been sharp and swift; but now he felt nothing but a strange and daunting sensation of cold and nakedness, as if his heart had been laid bare of flesh and ribs to a chill wind. He turned his head cautiously and looked at the big gold watch on the little gold stand on the table beside his bed. It was eight o'clock. His habit of many years was to wake at eight-thirty. He was a man of fixed habits—most of them good.

At that moment he heard the voice again, as clear as a bell; and yet he knew that it was not with the ears of his mortal flesh that he heard it. It said his name from some-

where close at hand. It was a dispassionate voice, very clear in tone, and absolutely unknown to him. The morning light, flooding in between the curtains of the four tall windows, lit every corner of the room, but disclosed no living thing. But Sayle had not expected to see anyone. He extended his right hand up and back, and pressed the button of an electric bell that hung above his pillow.

John Groom, the valet, answered the summons promptly, but with a question in his eyes. Eight-thirty, not eight, was the time for the bell. He came to the side of the bed and looked down at his master.

" Yes, sir ? " he asked.

Mr. Sayle gazed at him very steadily ; Groom, being an honest man, gazed as steadily back at him.

" My son," said Mr. Sayle, in a strange voice.

" Yes, sir, Captain Robert. What is it, sir ? Are you ill ? "

" 'Phone Mr. Todhunter—quick—to come here."

John Groom ran to the telephone, which was in the dressing-room, and called up Mr. Sayle's lawyer and also his doctor. While the valet was thus employed, Sayle heard the voice again—this time from the clear air within a yard of him.

" Give me one hour," he whispered.

But the request was made in vain. When the valet returned to the bedside the spirit of Robert Sayle had gone from that chilling clay and that bright room.

Captain Robert Sayle, M.C., in London, awoke to that May Day morning several hours before his father awoke to a wider day in New York, though the captain's watch made it nine o'clock. The reason for this is, I believe,

that the world, trying to observe the law of compensation in the matter of climate, wheels old London into the daylight while even the milkmen of New York are still asleep. The captain awoke slowly, and before his eyes were open he felt happy. Waking up happy was a habit of his which even innumerable returns to consciousness at all hours of the day and night in front-line dugouts had not broken him of; and since Armistice Day the delight of suddenly finding himself still alive every twenty-four hours made him want to sing. He was not gifted with either voice or ear for music, but he made all sorts of cheery sounds before breakfast every morning rain or shine—hybrid noises in which whistling, chanting and humming were mingled. Joy of life was what ailed him. His heart was light and unhaunted, like a new, many-windowed house. It contained no rooms with closed doors that he was afraid to open. He was young, and yet old enough to appreciate the fact of youth. Thirty years was his age. His body was as sound as a bell, though it was marked by several scars of honourable minor wounds and had been considerably knocked about of late. His courage was high and proven like a good sword. His education was various and extensive, his habits were gay but good, and his disposition was friendly. As for his worldly prospects—he was the only son of Robert N. Sayle, of New York.

Bob sprang from his narrow bed on this May Day morning, chanting and humming like a bumble-bee in a bottle. He turned on the water in the bath, picked up two morning papers and several letters from the floor beneath the slit in his front door and tossed them on to a table, shaved with cold water and then slid into his

cold bath. In the tub his chant grew louder and more distinct. To a listener, had there been one in the sitting-room, it would have sounded something like this :

" Major White of Bedford, umpty umpty wrench
Never lost a shilling, never lost a trench,
Fought the umpty brigadier, fought the umpty Hun,
Lost his umpty life because he wouldn't hide or run.

" Major White of Bedford left a umpty wife
Safe behind in Bedford, far from noise and strife.
Umpty umpty brigadier umpty, umpty un,
Lost his umpty wife because she wouldn't hide or run."

Upon leaving the bath he rang a bell ; and by the time he was half dressed there sounded a clatter and knock at his front door and he opened to Tom Snicken and breakfast. Snicken was his valet ; but owing to the compressed nature of the flat, Snicken lived far down among the caretakers. Snicken's left hand was always gloved and his left elbow always slightly crooked, but in every other particular he looked normal. He was evidently on the best of terms with his employer.

" Good morning, Snick." " Good-morning, sir." " How's the visibility ? " " Low, sir, but promising improvement. I had the eggs all poached, sir, and then one of the kids barged into me on the basement stairs and so I had to bring kippers." " Righto. They look like good kippers. Do you know if I have anything very particular to do to-day ? " " You spoke last night of cabling to New York, sir." " Write that down please. It is very important. And have you seen anything more of the—the gentleman in the white hat by any chance ? " " Yes, sir. That was what kept me out so late last night. I followed them home—sighted them by

chance on Oxford Street looking for a taxi, which they couldn't find, and followed them to the District Railway and out to Earl's Court. Sergeant Putty, late 7th King's Liverpool, was with me, so we did the job right, sir. He is her father, sir." "Ah! Are you sure of that? How do you know?" "She called him dad—and her name is June, sir. Putty and I got off at Earl's Court station with them and tracked them all the way home. Putty's leg nearly give out a few times. They live in Radcliffton Gardens, number five-two-five—and his name is John de la Reward, sir."

The captain had reduced his kippers to bones by this time and helped himself generously to marmalade.

"The fact that he is her father doesn't prove that she isn't married, I'm afraid," he said. "She isn't a widow, that's a sure thing. Write down the address, please. And what is the name? I didn't catch it."

"Reward, sir. John de la Reward, M.A., F.R.S., and plenty more. I looked him up in *Who's Who* this morning, sir, and he was there."

"Some name. It doesn't sound real or reasonable to me. Sounds more like the invention of a chorus girl than a name. I know a man in New York called Reward, and a mighty good chap he is, too—but all that de la stuff rings false in my ear."

Bob went out half-an-hour later and cabled from Charing Cross to New York for two hundred pounds; and then, in spite of the fact that the name de la Reward rang false to his ear, he went by the District to Earl's Court. While looking for Radcliffton Gardens he turned his mind inward upon himself in general and himself in his present hairbrained mission in particular, and felt

much amusement, some perplexity and a little self-pity. Why, in the name of all that is reasonable, sane and customary, was he looking for 525, Radcliffton Gardens, when he had half-a-dozen other things to do ? Because his man Snicken said it was the residence of a girl whom he had seen twice and never spoken to. He had lived thirty years and he knew hundreds of girls and women, of all sorts, shapes, degrees of ugliness and beauty and varieties of breeding ; and here he was wandering about a part of London that was as unfamiliar to him as Greenland, looking for the house of a girl he did not know. It was absurd. He should have been on his way to Richmond now, to lunch with the Hammersmiths—or at his Pall Mall Club, where he had a sort of near appointment with Dodd—or at Dick Bruce's studio, in Chelsea, where he was always welcome. Dick was the jolliest painter in London, and his sister was considered by many competent judges to be one of the most beautiful and charming women in London. Bob had considered her so himself, until his first glimpse of the tall, studious-looking man in the white felt hat. And yet here was Bob, wandering alone in strange streets and squares. It was pathetic. The world chased him—and a jolly, polite world it was, too—and he chased moonshine. He knew what he was looking for. Moonshine ? Not on your life. That was the cynic's name for it. He knew what he wanted, and he knew its real name.

" I want to fall in love," he said. " Fall ! Tumble ! Crash ! Care for a girl ! Rot ! I care for every clever and beautiful woman I know—and I don't care for cream in my coffee. Would I murder anyone, even a taxi-driver, at the request of any woman I know ?

Certainly not. I wouldn't shoot a cat, or pull a waiter's nose, or push a wheelbarrow along Regent Street, or revoke at Bridge, for the dearest and fairest of my many dear and fair companions. The pater, bless him, says he knows a girl who would make me the best wife in the world. I know fifty who would make me or any man with a decent income better wives than men deserve. That's the trouble ! I want love to hit me like a brick and hoist me like a nine-point-two. And that is what has happened."

Now we know why Captain Robert Sayle walked unfamiliar streets when he might have been comfortably seated elsewhere at any one of a score of tables, lunching with any one, or any two or three, of his scores of familiar friends. He who had found falling in love as easy as falling into a river and had immediately scrambled out again every time with graceful agility, had crashed. He who had thought of love as a cupid shooting blunt and perfumed arrows had learned that love's weapon of offence is something between a club, a pick-axe and a Mill's bomb. And he was glad of it. He had always got his fun out of life, often at the risk of life itself ; and now he saw new risks and prizes, new depths and new heights, of which he had never dreamed. It was madness. It was idiotic. It was great. He was glad of it, though it killed him.

He found Radcliffton Gardens and a house numbered 525. It was a house of comfortable width, and of two and a half-stories and a basement. Before it, behind a fence of stone and iron and living box, shone two small lawns like squares of green carpet. A path of grey flags ran from the gate to the front door. The glass of a conser-

vatory, full of ferns and blooms, bulged like a coloured bubble from one flank of the house. Ivy climbed halfway up the walls and all the windows were as bright and clear as spring water. Plane trees on the street and a big elm in a corner of the front enclosure, all in budding leaf, sketched traceries of shadow over roof and walls.

It was a house that looked like a home. It suggested cheery ways of life, every comfort, and at the same time a reserve of force on the part of its occupants. It looked to Bob like an ordinary near-town house of the better middling sort with the air of a great place. It showed, to his knowing eyes, the finish and spirit of a great place. He had known dozens of finer and much larger dwellings in town and country, and many with windows just as clear and lawns and hedges of the same perfection—but never before had any human habitation, cottage or villa or mansion, opened upon his vision with so tremendous a significance as the significance of this house. He walked past it briskly on the wide, deserted pavement. Three gates beyond he turned, swung his stick aimlessly for a few seconds, then retraced his steps slowly. He was within a yard of the gate of the significant house when he was suddenly inspired. The blood ebbed from his face and returned with a rush. He opened the gate and went up the narrow path of grey flagstones, and up three stone steps, and rang a brass bell beside the dark green door.

A middle-aged maid-servant opened the door. Bob produced a card from his cigarette case and handed it to the maid.

"I want to see Mr. John de la Reward," he said.

He was shown into a small room on the right of the

hall. He sat down by the window and tried to quiet his lungs and his heart ; and at the same time he gave ear intently to the faint interior sounds of the house in the hope of hearing that voice that he had never heard. What absurdity ! He had seen her twice. She had looked at him twice ; and here he was seated beneath her roof, looking out of one of her windows and waiting for her father. Suppose the gentleman in the white hat saw through his artful dodge ? He breathed deep and slow. The house was very quiet. Perhaps they were at lunch. This was worse than waiting for zero hour.

The door opened and the tall, middle-aged man, whom Bob Sayle had seen twice before, entered the room with Bob's card in his left hand and his right hand extended. His near-sighted eyes were fixed on his visitor's face with a kindly intensity of inquiry.

" Captain Sayle," said he. " Very good of you. Essex Regiment. You knew my boys. You were Tom's friend, perhaps ? "

" I am sorry," replied Bob ; and that was the truth. " I hadn't the pleasure of knowing your sons. The Essex had ten battalions in the field, and my service was with the fifth for a time, and after that with the ninth. It—it was about something else—perhaps you will think it no more than cheeky curiosity—that I have taken the liberty to call."

" Not at all," said the other quickly. " Any officer of that regiment—officer or man—is welcome here, I assure you. Come up to my study, Captain Sayle. This is a dull room."

He led the way up stairs and into a large, cheerful room at the back of the house. A fire of wood burned

on the hearth and the windows were open. Glancing down from one of the open windows, Bob saw screens of foliage and patches of lawn of a garden that had been hidden from him in the street. At his host's invitation he sat down and lit a cigarette.

"I came because of your name," he said awkwardly. "It is unusual; and I have a friend in New York whose name is Reward. Even Reward alone is an unusual name, I think. This sounds frightful cheek, I'm afraid."

"Far from it," returned the other. "It interests me greatly. Reward. There is a branch of the family in Canada that does not use the prefixes. There might well be a member of that branch in New York—or several of them, for that matter. There is an old gentleman of the name of Reward in New Brunswick, who is of the family. I wrote to him not more than a month ago, but have not yet received an answer. His grandfather settled in that colony in 1819, or thereabout. He was a younger brother of my great-grandfather."

Captain Robert Sayle was astonished. He had thought of the name of his father's right-hand man in a flash, at the very gate of the house, and had made use of it as an excuse for ringing the bell; and now he found it to be a reason as well as an excuse for calling. James Reward had once told him that his birthplace was somewhere in the woods of New Brunswick and that he had left it in the twelfth year of his age.

"My friend was born in that province," said Dick.

"At a place called Fisher Creek, in Victoria County?"

"That's it! Fisher Creek—away up in the woods. He didn't talk about it much, and never mentioned his people. He left home when he was only twelve

years old—about forty years ago, to judge by his appearance."

"And what sort of man is he, this friend of yours?"

"A good sort. He is older than I am. We didn't knock about together and that sort of thing. Fact is he was my father's friend more than mine—a great deal more; and he is a very busy person. James Reward is my father's right-hand man and has been in his employ over twenty years. He is possessed of amazing industry and business acumen."

"Ah! Business acumen. He wouldn't get that from his grandfather. And what is the character of the work he does for your father, may I ask?"

"Banking. Sayle and Sears. My father is the whole firm now and Mr. Reward is the brains and the dynamo of the entire business."

A gong boomed. Mr. John de la Reward looked at his watch and got to his feet. Bob followed his example with a heavy heart. He had shot his bolt and hit nothing but a page of other people's family history. His time was up and his excuse for calling at this house exhausted. What possible excuse could he find for a future call? And he had not seen her.

"Lunch," said de la Reward. "I hope you are free to take pot-luck with me, Captain Sayle. If so, please do. We have several interests in common to talk about, it seems—the regiment, and James Reward, and who knows what others? Come. You have no other engagement for lunch."

Bob mumbled a few polite protests even as he accompanied his host down stairs. His heart was as light as it had been heavy. His luck was in.

"I am in luck," said the host. "I was deserted by my daughter this morning and was rather dreading a lonely luncheon. I am dining out to-night, fortunately. Your visit was a pure fall of luck for me."

He did not see the dismay on his guest's face, for as he made that tragic statement of desertion he forged ahead to push wide the door of the dining-room.

Bob found that he wasn't hungry. He also made the discovery, before the meal was over, that he didn't care a hoot in hell—that he was interested in only one member of the combined families of de la Reward and Reward. But he played up to his host like a man. Of James Reward he told much more than he knew; but he kept to himself the interesting fact that his father was so set on his marrying Mr. Reward's daughter, Alice, that he (Bob) was loath to return to New York.

The coffee stimulated Bob. He said, "I hope the desertion is not of a serious nature."

"Desertion?" queried the other.

"You said your daughter had deserted you this morning."

"Ah! No, it is only for a week or two. She is visiting friends out of town. When she returns we expect to go abroad together for the summer—to visit our Canadian cousin."

"She is your only daughter, I suppose."

The middle-aged man smiled and blinked his short-sighted eyes.

"Which?" he asked. "I have two daughters and an adopted daughter."

"The one who deserted you this morning. But it seems that you have been deserted by all three."

" That was the adopted one. The others are married. They deserted me long ago for the fleshpots of Egypt."

Bob swallowed the last drop of coffee and sighed. He looked at his watch and remembered an appointment. At the door they shook hands, and Mr. de la Reward looked at Bob intently with his kindly, blinking eyes.

" It was very thoughtful of you to call," he said. " I find your information about James Reward exceedingly interesting. I shall write to him ; and have I your permission to mention your name to him ? "

" Do so by all means," returned Bob. " Is there anything else I can do for you in the matter ? Please consider me at your service."

" You are very good, Captain Sayle. I shall let you know. Your address is on your card, I believe. I shall write to let you know, depend upon it."

" Please do. I'll be delighted. Good morning, sir."

" Good morning, my dear fellow."

CHAPTER III

MOONSHINE

CAPTAIN ROBERT SAYLE, M.C., late of the Essex Regiment, received a cablegram from New York with his breakfast next morning. It was signed by James Reward and read: "Your father passed away this morning come home important." Bob saw the words distinctly enough when his glance first fell on them; but after that, though he continued to stare at the cablegram, the terrific words swam together like water and fused like flame before his eyes. And some of the water and the flame seemed to get at his brain and heart, numbing him and hurting him. Suddenly he dropped the fateful piece of paper and rubbed his eyes with both hands. Tom Snicken picked up the cablegram and read it as he laid it on the table.

"My God!" exclaimed Snicken. "Sir, I am—well, sir, you know!"

"Thanks, Snick, I know. But are you sure that is what it says?"

"Quite sure, sir. Passed away, it says. I am afraid there can't be any mistake about it. And you wrote him an extra long letter only last week, sir. I noticed it required two stamps."

" He'll never see it, Snick. It *was* a long letter—and a jolly one, too. I used to jolly him a good deal. He was more of a pal than a father to me. And I didn't know he was ill. He always kept himself in the pink of condition. I can't believe it. Lord ! I haven't seen him since I joined up in the winter of '14—when he came over to try to talk me out of it. He wanted me to go home and wait awhile—but when he found I wouldn't he was very decent about it. And now he's dead ! "

" I am afraid there can be no doubt of that, sir. You will be returning to New York now, sir, I suppose, to—to see to the estate ? "

" Of course," said Bob. And after a brief pause, during which he gazed unseeingly at the teapot before him, he added : " Why should I go ? "

" The affairs of the family, sir—of the business," replied Tom. " You are now the head of the family, sir."

" James Reward is there—the most able and most honest man in New York. My father trusted him and I trust him. My sisters are rich in their own rights and by marriage. Now that he is gone there is no hurry about my going home. I should have gone before—in time to see him."

" But, sir, your interests ! I imagine there are millions concerned. You must not forget your own interests, sir."

" You seem to have forgotten something more important to me than millions of money, Snick. How can I go away from London now ? You seem to forget the—the gentleman in the white hat."

" No, sir, I assure you. But this is a serious matter.

The death of your father, sir, and the responsibilities of wealth."

"But we know that he is not there—that he is dead! I should have gone the moment I got off the active list of the army. But what is the good of going now? As for the responsibilities of wealth—let James Reward continue to undertake them. You call my inheritance of dollars a serious matter. Then what, in Heaven's name, do you call this—this matter that now engages all my thought, day and night? What d'you call it?"

"I shall answer you frankly, sir, as I have always answered you, in peril as in safety, I call it an affair of the imagination, sir—a romantic soldier's whim—an idle and poetic gentleman's romance. You are young, sir; and in heart you are even younger than in years. A flash of eyes, a meeting of glances at the entrance to a tube station—once—twice—and there you are, sir. Does it seem likely, sir, that the lady you don't know and have seen only twice is better or cleverer or more beautiful than any one of all the ladies you know? It cannot possibly be real, sir. It isn't in reason. It is moonshine, sir, if you will pardon me for saying so—all very well for yesterday, sir, but to be treated at its true value now that matters of real importance demand your attention, sir."

"Tom, I thought you would understand. I thought you already understood. You have talked to me as any well-meaning stranger might talk. Moonshine! Moonshine and sunshine are one. My father has often named my behaviour in this war as moonshine. He was right—and therefore I was right. I have followed moonshine through—well, you know; and now that I see

another mighty gleam of it am I to turn aside to struggle with my poor rich father's accounts ? A whim ! Snick, I thought better of you."

The valet moistened his lips with his tongue.

" I *do* understand ! " he exclaimed. " I said those things—because it was my duty to say them. Let me get you fresh tea, sir. Try to eat, sir."

But Bob didn't eat. He wrote letters to his sisters and James Reward. He asked for full particulars of his father's illness and death, but did not mention his father's estate. He went to Hampton Court after lunch and spent lonely hours on the river. He felt remorse for not having gone home to see his father the moment he had been released from the army. That had been in February—two months ago. There had really been nothing to keep him here then except a whim, nothing then to keep him away from New York except his fond parent's activities as a matchmaker. He should have gone home. Now it was too late.

He dined before returning to town. He spent the evening alone in his rooms ; his thoughts full of his father.

The first post next morning brought him a letter from New York. He recognized the writing on the envelope and opened it with eager fingers. It was from his father and dated the 15th of April.

" Dear Bob,—I feel it my duty to tell you that in my opinion you are not playing the game. I should have told you so before this, for it has been my opinion longer than I care to say."

" That is cheering ! " exclaimed Bob, forgetting for a moment that the writer was dead. " That helps before breakfast. I'll hand him back a hot one for this."

And then he remembered.

" You are old enough to take life seriously. You have had your fling—often under protest from me—and now I want you to come home and be practical. You can no longer make the war an excuse for remaining on the wrong side of the Atlantic. But I have said all this to you before, in vain. I now find it my painful duty to bring you to your senses. I have reasoned with you ; and you have refused to see reason. You have always been cheerful and polite in your heedlessness to my wishes, I admit—but your joyousness and good manners are not to save you any longer. I gave way to you four years ago, in the matter of your taking a commission in the English army, thinking that if you survived that quite uncalled-for piece of quixotic tomfoolery you would make some effort to oblige me later. I see now that I was wrong. Bob, you are my only son. I want you here, where you belong—not to slave, as I slaved at your age—but simply to live as a grown man should. But I have said all this to you before ! Now read this carefully. I have made a new will to-day—and when you get this, son, pack up and come home and help me burn it and make a yet newer one. Mark that !—if your years of service in the army haven't deprived you of your understanding of the English language. In this new will you are down for *ten thousand dollars.* Not ten thousand a quarter, or even ten thousand a year—but just ten thousand. The old will told a very different story. Yesterday you were worth (in money and its equivalent, anyway) *six millions of dollars.* You can work out the difference for yourself. Better come home by the next boat, Bob, and help me draft another will.

Get here by the 15th of May, or this one stands. Your only father, ROBERT N. SAYLE."

"That does it!" cried Bob. "I wouldn't go home after that—for his money—even if he was still alive! No, I don't mean that!—and he does not mean what he has written. But I wouldn't take the six millions. Damn the six millions! He tried to frighten me!"

CHAPTER IV

WEB AND WOOF

MR. JAMES REWARD had reached the death-bed of his employer and friend, Robert N. Sayle, soon after the doctor and Mr. Todhunter the lawyer. Then he had heard particulars of the new will for the first time, from Todhunter. He had guessed something of the kind before, however, from hints dropped him during the past fortnight by Sayle himself. So he had cabled immediately to Captain Sayle, in London.

James Reward was fifty-two years of age and comfortably and happily established in life, as we already knew from his letter to his father on Fisher Creek. Judged by the contrast between his childhood and his present situation in life, he was a thing to wonder at. That he had attained the age of fifty-two years was, in itself, a wonderful thing ; that he had attained happiness was marvellous ; and that he possessed worldly wealth seemed incredible in the light of his hopeless beginnings. But all these things—his glowing life in his stalwart body, his domestic happiness and his accumulated dollars—were but the attributes and outward evidences of the crowning wonder, which was himself. In spite of Pod Reward, in spite of grief for his mother (who had died

when he was only six years old), in spite of hunger, neglect, terror, and his stepmother, his were the iron nerves, the sound body, the strong and understanding heart, and the clear and tireless brain of the second class. To classify brains is surely permissible. James Reward's mind looked nothing in quality or quantity, but it was of the second kind. It was clear and watchful—a mind, for organization and control. It dealt with established facts—gathered them together, followed them to logical conclusions, placed them side by side, built them up. It could construct, but it could not create.

James was bigger in both mind and heart than his employer had been, and had always made light of Mr. Sayle's fears for Bob. On more than one occasion, of late, he had argued with his friend on the subject of young Bob, and had displayed flashes of heat in his argument. He not only excused the gay and seemingly impractical son of his friend and employer, but he defended him. He defended his actions and his lack of action—the very things that the other condemned. It is probable that his attitude towards Bob was the only reason that had kept Sayle from telling him of the new will and making all the details of it known to him. On the last day of April, the day before Sayle's death, he had stood up to the millionaire in Bob's cause with more than usual frankness and at more than usual length. He had wrought then better than he knew, better than he or any living person should ever know. If Sayle had been given another hour of life—the hour he had asked for—James Reward would have seen the results of his argument.

On that occasion, Reward had told Sayle that the son

was right and the father was wrong. He had said: "Bob realizes his responsibilities far more honestly than you do. You say that he has behaved like a thoughtless boy throughout these last five years—that he has been inconsiderate of your feelings, undutiful, selfish and headstrong; and I say that he has been right and you have been wrong, that he has behaved like a man and—pay attention to this—like a gentleman. I do not use that word lightly in this connection. Bob has had advantages which you and I were too busy, or too poor, to know, and he has made the most of them. Therefore he is your superior and mine. You are a business man. During these last years you have behaved like an ordinary business man—damned ordinary; and your son has behaved like the gentleman that he is. You should be proud of him. To my way of thinking, your boy's little finger is worth more than the entire hearts and heads of my two busy, progressive, dutiful and selfish sons. Man, my sons are model sons—but I wish to heaven they had a spark of Bob's fire in their bellies and a gleam of his imagination in their skulls. And you expect Bob to come home now like a lamb, learn to do the things that my sons, and you and I, have to do because we know no better, and marry for life someone of your choosing! My dear old friend, you are crazy!"

Thus had James Reward talked to Robert N. Sayle on that last day of April; and if the millionaire had been granted that extra hour of life for which he had asked, James would have known that his talk had borne fruit. But as it was, he didn't know. No one knew.

Robert N. Sayle was buried and his will was read. The

daughters inherited their millions, cousins and aunts their tens of thousands, churches and charities their hundreds of thousands, and James Reward a million and the name and goodwill of the firm. The daughters inherited services of silver, horses, cars and houses, cousins and aunts inherited pictures and furniture and James Reward a prodigious library. An unnamed heir, " whose name will be found in the attached sealed envelope addressed to James Reward, the said envelope so addressed to be opened in private by the said James Reward and the name therein made known to my son, Robert Sayle, before being disclosed to any other person," inherited to the tune of 5,990,000 of dollars. As for " my son Robert Sayle, late of the Essex Regiment of the British Army," the sum of 10,000 dollars was the best that amazing last will and testament could be made to do for him, no matter how often it was read or in what position it was held. And James Reward was sole executor of the will.

James Reward opened the sealed envelope in the privacy of his private office, read the name therein set down in the handwriting of his dead friend and late employer, changed colour, whistled, scowled, swore a round oath, re-read the name many times with muttering lips, then returned it to the envelope, resealed the envelope and placed it, together with the will in his private safe. He then sent another cable to Bob Sayle, in London. " Please come home. Very important. Letter follows." That night he wrote the letter. It was a long and affectionate screed. It told of Robert N. Sayle's sudden death, and all particulars of the will, including the clause relating to the sealed letter, with the

exception of the name in the letter. Of the name James wrote, " Unless you demand this of me, I shall keep it to myself until I see you." A request for instructions concerning the disposition of the ten thousand dollars followed; and the letter concluded with assurances of friendship and admiration and of eagerness for a speedy meeting.

James Reward then set to work, like the honest and thorough business man that he was, to execute the will. This was no light task. The claimants to mahogany card-tables and brass fire-tongs gave him more trouble than did the claimants to millions.

In the meantime up on Fisher Creek, old Pod Reward continued to live his life of inferior indifference to civilization and the great world. His blood was slow now and his muscles were less active than of old ; but he felt as satisfied as ever with his own insufficiency. His third and last wife had left him some years before, with his permission. He had money hidden away, plenty to eat and smoke and Noel Sabatis to brag to. What more could a man want at his age ? He chuckled when he thought of those two letters that Dan Whalen had read to him down at Plaster Rock, the one from New York and the other from London. He told Noel Sabatis about them ; and Noel thought he was lying, of course. He showed the letters to Noel ; but even then the Maliseet did not believe, for he couldn't read.

" Jim is smart," said Pod, " but he ain't as smart as his old man yit. Cal'lated he'd git me with that there five thousand dollars—git me to say I was alive so's he could come up an' whale the life outer me. But I told Dan Whalen for to write and say as how I'm dead an' buried."

Sabatis grunted. He was a grand listener but a poor talker. He got as much fun out of thinking things as most people do out of saying them. When he spoke it was always to ask a question.

" When Dan read out that there letter, I see what Jim's after like a flash," continued Pod. " He been layin' low till he gits his strenth, that's it, sure's hell. Now he cal'lates he kin lick me. Well, maybe he kin—but he gotter cotch me first. He'd be growed up now, Jim would. In that there letter he names himself for fifty years old. By the jumpin' snakes, if I was fifty I'd invite him along an' lay for him ! D'ye mind Steve Doran ?—him with the red head—what I done to him ? "

" Jim rich man. How much ? " said Noel, ignoring the reference to Steve Doran, who had been an honest young woodsman who had once tried to take an axe-handle away from Pod just when he was belabouring the head and shoulders of his wife of the time with it.

" How much ! " exclaimed Pod, angry at the interruption. " I dunno. More nor ye could count in a week, I guess. Didn't he say he'd send me five thousand dollars quick's I could ask for it ? Five thousand plunks—jist for the fun o' finding me an' beatin' me up ! But ye mind Steve Doran ? I cal'late fifty was jist about my tally then. Well, ye mind what I done to Steve Doran."

" Kick 'im in the belly," said Sabatis in his emotionless voice.

So old Pod Reward continued to talk and old Noel Sabatis continued to think. Sabatis felt a devilish twitch now and then in the shrunken muscles of his right arm ; and sometimes he regarded various portions of

Pod's anatomy, and sometimes the horn haft of his sheath-knife, with calculating eyes. He was dead sick of Pod and of his bragging talk and of his bullying ways. He had felt this way about him for years and years.

Down at Plaster Rock, Dan Whalen was involved in a bout of literary activity that engaged every minute he could spare from his store-keeping, his official duties and the purely personal matters of eating and sleeping. He lost sleep—but it was all his own fault. It began with the letter that he had promised Pod Reward to write to James Reward. That letter was easy ; but if Pod had seen it and been able to read it he could not have recognized it as a compliance with his instructions.

Its construction presented no literary difficulties to its author, however. It said that Pod Reward had been greatly moved when the letter from Mr. James Reward was read to him. It went on to say that Pod was no more handy with his pen now than he had been forty years ago, and so he had asked his friend, Daniel Whalen, of Plaster Rock, to write a reply for him ; that Poddington was poor and in ill-health, but had no use for such a large sum of money as five thousand dollars, but stood in need of two hundred and could do with an odd hundred every now and then, as he owed considerable for groceries and so on ; and that such sums might be sent to him at Plaster Rock in the form of postal money orders.

That was easy ; and then Dan began a letter to John de la Reward—and there the trouble started. He saw that it would be a terrible shock to John to admit that his cousin Poddington had never gone to school—a shock so great that it might discourage the Englishman from visiting Fisher Creek. Mr. Whalen wanted John

on Fisher Creek. He entertained an idea, hazy but strong, that something might be made out of John, in connection with Pod and his past, once he had John in the woods. Whalen knew something of Pod Reward's past ; though not as much as Sabatis ; and he suspected more—but even his suspicions did not mount to more than Noel Sabatis actually knew. He " sized " up Mr. John de la Reward as a wealthy, scholarly and amazingly simple English gentleman, full of family history and harmless family pride. He had read somewhere or other about just such an English gentleman as that. And he calculated that no one but a simpleton would stick to such a long-winded, useless name as de la Reward. Even old Pod's grandfather had shown git-up-and-git to discard the de la stuff.

Mr. Whalen was satisfied with his calculations so far, but he possessed knowledge enough of humanity to realize that very few people are absolute fools. He had known men who were soft and blunt as feather beds in some fields of thought and hard and sharp as knives in others. He recalled to memory a schoolmaster of his youth on the big river who had never been able to master the simple science of paddling a canoe without changing over after every four strokes, and yet had " figgered " like a whirlwind and again and again displayed qualities of suspicion and detection as marvellous as they had been unpopular in the school. Very likely John de la Reward was as smart in some things as he appeared to be soft in others. In all probability he was a master and a judge of the difficult art of letter-writing.

With the supposition of this probability for guide, Mr. Whalen set to work to answer John's letter to Pod.

In this affair he was to take upon himself the identity of Pod—but not of the Pod that he knew. So, first of all, he had to imagine a Pod that would be attractive to a simple, scholarly and wealthy English gentleman with a three-piece name ; a kindly, highly educated, old-fashioned Pod ; a retired, hospitable, honourable Pod who liked to be called Poddington for short ; in short a Pod like nothing he had ever seen. But this was easy. Mr. Whalen soon imagined a Poddington to his taste. Now came the actual writing of the letter in which this amiable, well-bred and slightly doddering Pod of his imagination was to be carried across the Atlantic and into the heart and convictions of his Cousin John. An expurgated dictionary, a school text book on English composition and a work entitled " Society Correspondence in all its Branches " formed the raw material of this new deal.

Mr. Whalen did it. He excited a good deal of suspicion in Plaster Rock while he was about it, but he did it. His wife thought he was crazy, and so did he. His daughter thought he was writing a book—and sometimes he wasn't sure that she wasn't right. He acquired a distaste for the English language that amounted to disgust. But he wrote the letter, addressed it and placed it in the mail-bag with his own hand.

In London, Captain Sayle received James Reward's second cablegram and paid no attention to it. He knew that Reward wanted to see him about the will ; but he already knew all that he wanted to know of that document. That is what his father thought of him just before his death—ten thousand dollars. Right oh ! Let it stand at that. He had a few other thousands in a New York

bank and a few valuable pictures done by distinguished modern painters. Also, he had his health, his brains and his education. And he had his freedom—which he didn't intend to sell—and his unimpaired appetite for moonshine. Bob entertained no fears of starvation, or even of boots run down at the heels. There was the army; and there again, if the worst transpired, was his reputation as an entomologist. He was qualified to lecture in that science or to write of it. But more about his entomology later.

Mr. John de la Reward, M.A., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., of four clubs and 525, Radcliffton Gardens, welcomed home his adopted daughter four days after Captain Robert Sayle's visit. He told her of the young man's call. At her request, he described the young man; and if Bob had heard him he would have been astonished to learn how little those short-sighted eyes had missed. June laughed and coloured at the description.

"That is the very man," she said; "and you thought he had come to tell you about a man he knew named James Reward!"

"That is what he came for, my dear," returned John. "He told me about James Reward—and I am convinced by what he said, that James is a son of Poddington and therefore a great-grandson of Captain Edward de la Reward. But why do you call him 'the very man,' my dear child?"

"Because he is the very man I want to meet," she replied.

"He served with a battalion of the Essex and was awarded the Military Cross, and he is a son of a great New York banking firm—of the head of the firm, I

should say—and seems a well-mannered and intelligent young man—but what do you know of him, my dear June, that you should want to meet him? Had you ever heard of him before?"

"No; but I have seen him—twice," she said. I recognize him by your wonderful description, Dad. Your powers of observation and description are wonderful. I have seen him twice when we were together. He looked at me very hard both times—as if he wanted to say something to me. I am glad he called, for that means he took the trouble to find out where we lived and our name. Did he ask for me?"

"Now that I come to think of it, he did. He asked about my daughter. He accepted my invitation to remain to lunch as if he hadn't eaten for a week; and when I told him that I was alone he fairly crumpled where he stood. So that is his game! I promised to communicate with him."

"You have his address, then. Good! He has an honest face; and the son of a New York banker who wins his M.C. as an officer in the Essex Regiment should be encouraged. He has very jolly grey eyes. You must ask him to dinner. Where is his address?"

"I have it somewhere, my dear. He gave me his card, with his town address written on it. It is somewhere here. I put it in my poclet. Here it is. No it isn't. Now where the mischief is it? I have it somewhere."

But he couldn't find that card. Every pocket of every coat that he had worn; or might by any chance have worn, since the time of Bob's call, was searched. Lots of things which he had forgotten were discovered, but the

card was not found. His study and his bedroom were ransacked—in vain. Then he cudgelled his brains for the address ; and that effort proved equally vain. He was sorry ; but June was sorrier, for she had liked the way that young man had responded to her glances.

Because of the loss of that card, Bob waited in vain for a note or a telephone call from Mr. John de la Reward. But Bob did not know the reason. He waited day after day, buoying himself with morning hopes which always collapsed and let him down before night. So he hadn't made a hit with the man with the white hat, evidently. Perhaps he hadn't "put it over." Perhaps he had been too artful—but it was much more likely that he had not been artful enough. He waited. As the bright days wore out, he became convinced of the fact that he had failed to "get it across"—but he continued to wait. He wandered about the town, afraid to go on the river or into the country for more than a few hours at a time—afraid of missing a message from Radcliffton Gardens. Two weeks passed, and the long and affectionate letter arrived from James Reward. Bob was deeply touched by the affection in the letter but not at all by the mention of the mysterious name in the sealed envelope. The identity of the heir to those few odd millions of dollars that might have been his meant nothing to him. He wrote that to Reward, in a friendly way ; and at the same time he excused himself from sailing to New York just then on the plea of more important business in London. He went on waiting for a word from the man in the white hat, and hunting for another sight of the girl.

On the morning of June the 3rd, Bob awoke and found

that he had reached the end of his tether of inaction. He set out for Radcliffton Gardens immediately after breakfast. During the past weeks he had done this a dozen times, at various hours of the day and night, without once making his objective ; but this morning he did not pause in his stride until the brass bell beside the dark green door was in his hand. As he awaited an answer to his ring he busied himself with the invention of a few intriguing details of the history of the Fisher Creek branch of the family of de la Reward.

The same middle-aged person who had opened the door to him before opened to him now.

" Nobody is at home, sir," she said promptly, as if she had been primed with the remark and posted behind the door all ready for him.

He stared at her with eyes darkened by quick pain.

" They have gone abroad, sir," she hastened to add. " They went two days ago—Mr. de la Reward and Miss June."

" Abroad ? Where to ? " he asked.

" They left no address, sir. Letters are to be held. They will be home in September, if not before."

Bob turned and went away. The sun was shining and Radcliffton Gardens looked their very best. A big white car went by, driven by a very pretty woman who fairly glowed with the joy of life. Bob looked at her and wondered dully what was the matter with her. Suddenly John de la Reward's mention of a probable visit to the Canadian cousin flipped in his brain. His eyes brightened and he quickened his pace.

CHAPTER V

NOCTURNAL ACTIVITIES ON FISHER CREEK

OLD Pod Reward crawled from his blankets and, without striking a light, pulled on his boots. As he pulled his breath hissed through his sparse teeth. You wouldn't have needed to see him to know that he was in a bad temper. The time was close on midnight—but Pod didn't care a hoot in hell what time it was. His fretful thoughts of Noel Sabatis, that cussed Injun. Noel had been with him until an hour ago. Noel had sat with him from seven till eleven, eating his grub and smoking his tobacco and grunting at him and contradicting him. Yes, Noel had contradicted him three times that night, flat-footed, in what passed for plain English on Fisher Creek. And he had grunted in a nastier way than usual. Pod knew what Sabatis meant by his grunts just as sure as if the Maliseet swore or said, "Ye're a liar." Also, Pod knew that he was dry—dry as an old moose horn; and he felt a conviction that now, whatever o'clock it might happen to be, was time for a few drinks. He had stood for about as much Noel Sabatis as he could stomach. If Sabatis didn't pretty soon start in eating less and smoking less and contradict-

ing less, there'd be a bunch of old-fashioned trouble on Fisher Creek.

"D—— thievin' old Injun!" exclaimed Pod. "I've walloped him before, and by the jumpin' Gee Whitticker I'll wallop him agin!"

He felt his way out of the cabin and around to a lean-to shed in the rear. The light was poor, so he damned high heaven. He recognized and rejoiced in the mood that was upon him. He knew it of old. It was now nearly a year since he had last felt it; and on that particular occasion he had not been able to find anything living—man, woman, beast or even Noel Sabatis—to vent it on. Sometimes in the old days he had worked it off, and more often he had fought it off—but it had always spelt a busy day or night and trouble for somebody.

In the shed he found a short-handled spade. With this he crossed the little clearing and entered the edge of the forest. He moved slowly, muttering as he moved. He wouldn't stand for no back-chat from Sabatis, nor from no one else, red, white or black. He was Pod Reward, he was, and this here was Fisher Crick. He wouldn't be rid over by nobody, he wouldn't. He cal'-lated he had a few pounds of kick in him yet. And so on. And then some more. Pod was feeling fine; and it was a good thing for his neighbours that they were few and far and scattered.

Pod scooped up and set aside a slab of green moss from a spot snug against the base of a big spruce tree. He delved in the loam for a minute, then laid the spade aside, knelt and with both hands lifted a wooden box from the hole in the ground. It was just the ordinary sort of

box that any grocer will let you carry away if he is in a good humour and will charge you ten cents for if he isn't. Pod had carried it away without reference to the humour of the grocer. Now he removed its cover and counted its contents by touch. Eight bottles. Eight black, four-sided bottles with high, square shoulders. Correct. In one bottle the cork was loose; and that, too, was as it should be. Pod's exploring fingers detected the loose cork. He sat down beside the hole with his back against the tree, lifted that bottle from among its fellows and the cork from the bottle.

The old man filled his mouth until his wrinkled cheeks were distended, and gulped it down in one motion without batting an eye. Then, resting the bottle on his knee, he breathed noisily and glared around him challengingly in the darkness. "One," he said. "Two, an' I'll drag the hide offen him an' three I'll kill him, the sassy, thievin' Injun!"

He repeated the operation. "Two," he said. I'll larn Noel Sabatis who's boss on Fisher Crick. Cal'lates I ain't as smart as I uster be, I guess. Sass me back in my own house, would he? Steve Doran tried that on—an' look what happened to Steve Doran! The time was when game-wardens was scart to cross me on this crick."

He filled his mouth with gin for the third time and swallowed it. He had a capacious mouth. The gin was pre-prohibition stuff; and Pod was not a steady drinker. The devil that was in him danced a lively jig and told him that he was as good a man as he had ever been. Pod filled and swallowed again. "God help Noel Sabatis," he said. He returned the cork to the bottle and the bottle to the box. He replaced the cover

and lowered the box into the hole in the ground. With great care he spaded in the earth and set the slab of moss over the scar. He returned the spade to the shed and set off down stream for the cabin of Noel Sabatis.

Noel Sabatis wasn't at home that night—but Pod Reward didn't know that until he got there. Noel was doing a little of the social stuff on his own that night; and when Pod lit out for Noel's place, the dusky aborigine crawled from the underbrush, scratched a match on a patch of his lower garments and examined the moss at the foot of the big spruce tree. He had been in the underbrush quite a while, intently observing Pod Reward with his keen eyes. He lifted the slab of moss; he scraped the earth away; he raised the box, removed the cover and located the right bottle and pulled the cork. Noel's manner of imbibing raw gin was not Pod's. He nearly strangled at the first contact—but after that he just tipped the bottle and let the contents gurgle. Fortunately, the contents did not amount to much. He tossed the empty bottle into the dark and lugged the box away to a new hiding place. After having covered it with moss and brush, he returned to the big spruce, and explored the hole in the ground with his fingers. The bottom and sides of the cavity were firm. They had not been broken. There was nothing else in the hole. So cunning Noel Sabatis deposited lumps of punk-wood and a few stones to fill the space lately occupied by the box, then replaced the loam and the moss. He made a neat job of it—but still he did not seem to feel satisfied with his night's work. It had not been for the secret of the hidden store of gin that he had spied upon Pod Reward that night and many nights

before. It was the secret of the hiding place of Pod's store of coin of the realm that had so often kept Sabatis up and about at all hours of the night. He had hoped to find the money and the liquor in the same hole. Now he went around and around the big spruce tree, exploring every inch of ground—but all to no purpose. This circular exercise on all fours, working in perfect unison with the gin inside him, made him dizzy, thirsty and peevish.

Noel Sabatis knew that Pod had money hidden somewhere—hard, round, metal money. Pod had bragged of it to him once or twice. There was the leather wallet hidden somewhere in the shack, well lined with five and ten dollar notes which the old man had saved in recent years from his sales of furs. The Maliseet knew about the wallet, of course—but that was not what he wanted. The thing that had been in his mind for years was Pod's collection of minted money. What he didn't know about that collection, he suspected. He knew that it existed ; also that very little of it, if any, had been honestly come by. For instance, there was the little bag of moose hide which Pod had taken from the dead pedlar fifteen years ago last January. (The pedlar had died in the deep snow—of starvation and exposure, so Pod had said at the time ; but Noel had seen the body and ever afterward thought of starvation as a very violent manner of death). Pod had said that the little bag was full of coppers, and had given Noel a five-dollar gold piece.

Noel returned to the box and extracted a bottle. He crossed the little clearing then and entered Pod's shack. He lit a lantern, found a corkscrew and treated his thirst.

He ransacked the shack for the wallet, but without success. He loaded Pod's rifle and laid it on the table, between the bottle and the lantern. Then he sat down and blinked at the lantern and tried to remember what he had planned to do next.

In the meantime, Pod Reward arrived at Noel's place on the crest of a steadily rising wave of rage. He kicked open the door of that humble abode, yelled a blood-curdling warning and sprang into Noel's bunk like a wild cat. He lit on empty blankets. He bumped himself out of the bunk almost as quickly as he had shot into it, turned and started for the grey square of the open door, afraid of a trap. Something grabbed him by an ankle and brought him to the floor with a smack, face down ; and then something hit him.

The mother of Noel Sabatis had come by canoe from the Reservation on the main river to visit her son. She was near ninety years old—all brown leather and maternal instinct. This instinct had brought her to Fisher Creek that evening, away from the never-failing buckwheat pancakes and salt pork of her grandson's house on the Reservation. She had not seen Noel for eight months and felt sure that he was not looking after himself as a young man should. She had brought blankets, food and tobacco with her ; and upon finding the shack empty but evidently not deserted, she had cooked, eaten, smoked and gone to sleep on the floor. The sudden and violent opening of the door by Pod Reward had waked her, and the blood-curdling yell of him had made known to her the identity and temper of the intruder. She knew Pod and his violent moods of old. In his tenderer years she had dealt successfully

with his moods many times, using paddles, her hard right hand and sticks of stove-wood indiscriminately as they offered. Now she knelt up and armed herself with a round, hard stick of maple.

Mrs. Sabatis laid aside the faggot and lit a lamp. She turned the figure of the intruder on to its back. Yes, it was that Pod Reward, sure enough—and with a knife in his hand. She smiled, glad of the good use she had put the stick of stove-wood to. She tied him at wrists and ankles with the thongs from Noel's snowshoes and poured spring water over his head and face until he opened his eyes.

Pod looked up at the old woman and recognized her. His mood of violence was gone. He asked for a drink of water.

Up stream at Pod's place, Noel Sabatis slept heavily for hours with his flat face on the table. When he opened his eyes, dawn was in the room, mixing dismally with the yellow light of the smoky and smelly lantern. Noel sat up with a shiver, and stared with round eyes at the lantern, the high-shouldered bottle and the rifle lying across the table. His heart kicked with a swift dread. He turned his head cautiously and looked at the bunk and the floor. To his unspeakable relief he did not see Pod Reward in either place. He got swiftly to his feet, extinguished the lantern, unloaded and returned the rifle to its place and pocketed the bottle. He bolted from the shack at such an amazing rate of speed that if Pod had been waiting outside for him with a duck-gun I swear he would have missed him clean. But there was no sign of Pod; so Noel returned and closed the door. Then he went to the big spruce beyond the clearing, and past the

spruce to the place where he had hidden the box. He carried the box back to the tree. He removed the moss and the soft earth and the stones and chunks of punk-wood, working with the swiftness of fear. He didn't want to come to an open clinch with that old devil for a few bottles of gin. The secret of the minted money was still to learn ; and that could not be learnt from a dead Pod or by a dead Sabatis. He recovered the empty bottle from the underbrush. He returned the box to the hole and covered it carefully with the loam and moss. The box contained eight bottles, its original number—but one of them was empty and one had a loose cork. This done, Noel took to the woods and started for home at a shuffling trot, by a circuitous route.

Noel Sabatis looked out at his cabin cautiously from the edge of the forest. He saw the smoke crawling up from the rusty pipe that served as a chimney, and his old heart knocked hard against his ribs. So Pod was still there. But why was he still there ? It wasn't like Pod, this hanging around and settling down to breakfast where he couldn't find what he had come after. No, that was never Pod's way. Noel crawled like a snake from the shadows of the forest wall into the clearing. He wriggled from hummock to hummock, from stump to stump ; and when he arrived at the cabin he lay very still for several minutes with his ear to a crack in the log wall. He heard someone moving about within and he caught a whiff of frying bacon. Bacon ? Had Pod provisioned himself with bacon when setting out to do murder last night ? Not likely. Noel arose cautiously to his feet, raised himself to his full height of five feet four inches (less shrinkage due to age and rheu-

matics), and peered fearfully in at the dusty little window. He continued to stand on tip-toe for full a minute, staring. And while he stared he thought hard. Then he relaxed, turned and hastened back to the shelter of the woods. He hurried down to the creek, keeping always a screen of foliage between himself and the shack, saw his mother's canoe there at the edge of the water and his own far back in a bed of alders. He launched his own canoe and got into it.

Noel Sabatis was a poor actor. He lacked imagination to believe what was not so, and still more to make another believe what he did not believe himself; and yet he wanted to go up to his shack now and make Pod Reward believe that he had been on the water ever since eleven o'clock last night. How was it to be done—for done it had to be, somehow, so that Pod's suspicions should not be aroused. Then an inspiration came to him—the second, or third at most, that had ever visited him. The hard material and workmanlike construction of Noel's skull were natural discouragers of inspiration. But now he was lit by one, you bet! He ran the canoe ashore and made all speed up the narrow track to the open door of his cabin. There was his aged but tireless mother at the rusty stove. With two grunts he expressed pleasure and relief.

"See smoke an' don't know," he said.

"Where you go las' night?" she asked.

"Darn fool, me," he replied. "Start for Plaster Rock for make trade. Don't take skins. Come back pretty soon, dam quick. Dam fool, what!"

Then he permitted himself to become aware of the presence of Pod Reward. There lay Pod in the

bunk, tied hand and foot, staring at him. Noel stared back.

"What you do?" he asked. "How you git here, hey—what?"

"Come las' night, with big knife an' yell like Lucifer, an' try for murder you. Find me here—with one good stick stove-wood," said the old squaw.

"Me murder Noel Sabatis!" exclaimed Pod. "Jessie you're crazy. Me an' Noel lives here on Fisher Crick like two brothers. Me kill Noel! No mor'n Noel would try for to kill me. Don't he live on me? I come after him las' night to raise a scare in him, for a joke—an' ye lambaste me over the head this a-way, Jessie Sabatis! Ye're old enough for to have more sense. Tell her to lemme up, Noel, an' gimme a mug of tea."

Noel turned his back upon the bunk and his flat face full upon his mother. A flicker of a smile touched his lips and he winked slowly with his left eye. Then he went to the bunk and cut the snowshoe thongs from Pod's wrists and ankles.

Pod had a lump on the side of his head that didn't belong there as a natural feature, as big as a duck's egg. But Pod was a tough old bird—as tough outside as inside. He sat up in the bunk and drank a mug of strong tea. Then he left the bunk, joined the others at table and made a hearty breakfast. He laughed (somewhat painfully) at old Jessie's unfortunate mistake of last night and even at his own unfortunate and unusual condition. He admitted that he had been slightly under the influence of strong liquor at the time of his untimely visit. He said that, after Noel left him, he found a bottle containing a finger or two of gin. He

drank it, just to get it out of the way—and it flew to his head.

"That was the last drop of liquor to my name—an' a good thing, too!" he concluded.

Pod went up stream to his own shack that afternoon. He visited the big spruce tree beyond the clearing before dark, feeling the need of a stimulant. The empty bottle and the bottle with the loose cork and diminished contents told him a part of the truth at least of Noel's setting out for Plaster Rock to be a lie. Then what else had Sabatis done last night, besides explore his hidden store of gin? For how long had Sabatis been spying on him? How much did Sabatis know? And what had brought old Jessie to Fisher Creek?

Pod moved about the little clearing, with his eyes on the ground, trying to look casual in case the Maliseets had followed him up stream and were watching him from cover. The ground looked right enough—but so had the moss at the foot of the big spruce tree. He could not do anything more while daylight held to ease his fears, so he retired to his cabin. He bolted the door, hung an empty sack across the window, loaded his rifle and made himself a bed on the floor as far as possible from his bunk. He thought of how straight he had gone in the dark for Noel's bunk, and how fortunate Noel had been in being somewhere else at the moment.

Pod slept without interruption and awoke of his own accord shortly after seven o'clock. He uncurtained his window and opened his door. His head felt almost normal again, so excellently had it been constructed to resist pressure from without, and his equally tough

old stomach demanded food. He attended to the requirements of his stomach; and as soon as darkness filled the clearing he went out, armed with his rifle and the short spade. He leaned the rifle against an old pine stump that was barkless and as grey as ashes, and lifted and set aside a flat grey stone from between its forked roots. Then he dug, placing each spade-full of earth close at hand. He worked slowly and paused often to give ear to the soft sounds of the night and to peer into the gloom and squat shadows around him. It was a misty night, with a few stars glimmering. He heard the piping of frogs, the barking of a fox, the dismal fluting of a whip-poor-will from a cedar swamp.

Old Pod Reward dug deep. At last the iron of his spade struck dull and dry on hollow wood. He laid the spade aside, knelt and reached far down into the hole with both arms. His fingers were on the edges of the small, weighty box when he suddenly withdrew his arms and sprang to his feet with incredible swiftness. What had he heard? What did he see? He snatched up his rifle and fired. The flame of the exploded cordite stabbed the gloom. Something fell heavily. Pod dropped the rifle and leapt forward, fumbling with his hands. He found the intruder, who lay face-down across a hammock of moss. He touched the shoulders. They were broad—much broader than the shoulders of little, old Noel Sabatis. He felt the texture and fashion of the coat which covered those motionless shoulders, He tried to turn the body on to its back, but before he had it half way over it sat up and a spurt of white light flamed into his face. He jumped back, covering his eyes with his hands.

" Stand still ! " cried a voice he did not know. " I've got your rifle, you old devil ! "

Pod stood still and continued to shield his eyes with his hand.

" You had better help me to the house and then send someone for a doctor—unless you are still in the same mind about murdering me of forty years ago," continued the unknown voice.

CHAPTER VI

THE FLIGHT

JAMES REWARD had left New York at the impulse of a sudden whim when the bulk of the work as executor of the will of the late Robert N. Sayle had been cleared up. He had received Bob Sayle's cablegram from London and, later, a long letter. These had not only disappointed him deeply, but had hurt and worried him ; and he had seen that nothing more could be done in that case by correspondence—that he should have to talk to Bob eye to eye, and prove himself and his friendship to the young man, before anything reasonable could be produced from that unfortunate tangle. From Plaster Rock he had received Dan Whalen's reply to his letter to his father, and had found much to lighten his humour in the postmaster's letter. He had long felt the need of a change by way of a rest ; and surely Fisher Creek offered a quick and complete change. So he had packed a bag and departed from New York, leaving his address of Plaster Rock, and his business affairs—every thing but his distress of mind over his friend's will—in the hands of his family. On the big river he had bought a canoe and blankets and provisions, and with this outfit he had made the journey to Plaster Rock by rail. There

he had not called on Mr. Whalen ; and after a night at the little hotel he had launched his canoe very early in the morning and started up stream alone. He had taken his time, for though his muscles were in fair condition the palms of his hands were very tender. He had landed and made a drift-wood fire and eaten bread and bacon and drunk smoky tea at ten in the morning, and again at two o'clock, and again at five, and yet again at eight—all this for the fun of lighting fires and boiling the kettle. On Fisher Creek memories became very clear and terrifying. He had flashed his electric torch on himself several times, and felt his cigar case, his watch and his big limbs, to re-assure himself of the fact that forty years had passed and that he was not still the defenceless boy of twelve. He had remembered every landmark on both shores as he came to it. How the stream had shrunk and the big trees dwindled. He had found the old landing place without showing a light ; he had gone up the narrow path without making a sound, looked into the dark and empty shack, then gone around the corner of the shack to the little clearing. He had hearkened, and his ears had been rewarded. He had moved stealthily in the direction of the sounds that had attracted him. A spurt of flame had leapt at him and a stab of pain had plunged through his left shoulder.

" Who—who be ye ? " faltered Pod Reward.

" I am Jim," replied the intruder. " Jim Reward, come home to see his dear old father—and I am bleeding like a stuck pig."

The old man was bewildered and thoroughly frightened. He helped the big stranger to the shack, eased him down in the bunk and lit a lantern. By the other's direction

he cut away the blood-soaked coat sleeve and the crimson linen beneath it and washed away the slow-welling blood with cold water from the spring. The bullet had gone clean through the top of the shoulder.

" Cut off more of my shirt and bandage the wound as well as you can—and then light out for a doctor," said James. " You have nothing here, I suppose—no iodine ? "

" There's old Jessie Sabatis down to Noel's place," replied Pod. " She come up las' night from the Reservation. Cal'late she knows mor'n most doctors."

" Jessie Sabatis ! D'you mean Noel's mother ? She must be very old."

" She ain't mor'n a hundred, an' spry as ever she was."

" Tie up my shoulder and go and fetch her. Tell her it's little Jim Reward needs her because his father has hurt him—just like he used to need her sometimes forty years ago. Bring her back with you, or there'll be trouble. If I die in here you'll swing for it, you old devil ! "

" I'll fetch her, Jim—or bust. I didn't figger to harm ye, Jim. How'd I know it was yerself spyin' on me there in the dark ? She ain't bleedin' extry strong, now, Jim. That ye be, all tied up as slick as a doctor could rig ye !—and here's a mug of spring water in reach of yer right hand. Ye won't need no doctor from outside, Jim."

" That's as may be. Now give me some ammunition for this rifle and then clear out and find old Jessie."

" Ammunition, Jim ? "

" That's it, my dear old father—cartridges. I'll feel safer with half-a-dozen rounds while you are away.

Your wife may be somewhere on the premises, for all I know. Look sharp! Get busy! Hump yourself!"

"That one's dead, an' there ain't no other here now, Jim."

"Give me the cartridges, anyhow. I'm not taking any chances in my father's house. Move lively—or you'll be sorrier than you have ever been sorry about anything, that I got away forty years ago."

Pod gave him five rounds of ammunition and then left the cabin. Pod's wits were in a whirl. His crooked, dark old heart was cold with fear. He knew that the big, masterful man back there in his bunk was the thing the frightened thin little boy Jim had developed to. The big man had the eyes of the little boy—eyes that had sometimes caused Pod to stay his hand but had never had any other effect on the beastly stepmother than to increase her senseless fury. Yes, those eyes had daunted him on two or three occasions more than forty years ago, and he had been comforted since by the thought that they were closed in death, as were the eyes of the woman from whom the boy had derived them; and here they were, looking out now from the face of a big man with a hand like an iron hammer! This was the identical situation that Pod had sometimes feared in his dreams—the return of a full-grown Jim. The fearful and incredible thing had come to pass. The boy Jim had returned to Fisher Creek.

Pod did not contemplate resistance or defiance. He might think of flight later, when he knew something of his son's intention towards him. In the meantime he must try to please him and hope for the best. So he slid his old bark canoe into the black water and paddled

down to Noel's front. His fear of James had driven all thought of the strained and suspicious condition of affairs between himself and the tribe of Sabatis clean out of his head. He knocked on Noel's door, standing fairly before it ; and to the Maliseet's inquiry as to his identity and his business he replied truthfully. But Noel did not unbolt the door immediately.

" Got knife all ready, maybe," said Noel. " A'right. Got gun here."

" Yer a fool," returned Pod. I've shot a man, I tell ye—an' I ain't got knife nor gun—an' it's Jim I've shot. If Jessie can't doctor him up ye'll hev to go down to Plaster Rock and fetch in a doctor."

" Yer a liar an' always was. Ye killed Jim forty years ago."

" Unfasten that thar door and stand ready with yer guns and yer clubs, the both of ye, and I'll open and walk right in ; and if I hev gun or knife on me ye kin shoot and be damned to ye ! D'ye think I'm scart of ye, Noel Sabatis, or of any Injun or squaw. But I'm scart of Jim."

He heard the old woman's voice, then the withdrawing of the rusty iron bolt. He saw the lamplight escaping through chinks in the old door.

" Come in," said old Jessie Sabatis. " We got the light on ye, Pod Reward—an' the muzzle of a duck-gun."

Pod opened the door without a moment's hesitation and stepped into the cabin. He trusted Jessie and he had long been of the opinion that Noel wasn't a killer. He found Noel with the duck-gun, sure enough, and the old squaw with an axe. He sneered at the son and snarled at the mother—but the truth is that the sight of

the axe in those ancient, claw-like hands gave him a nasty, turned-over feeling in his stomach.

"Put 'em away," he said. "We got trouble enough on Fisher Crick now without makin' none for ourselves. Jim's over to my place with a bullet hole through his shoulder an' wants Jessie Sabatis or a doctor for to fix him up. He come on to me in the dark—an' I let fly. Ye've doctored many a knife-cut and bullet wound, Jessie—many a one worse nor what I give Jim to-night. We gotter to patch him up and git him out or all Noo York, and maybe a bunch of game wardens, will be up here a-pryin' into things."

"An' maybe police," said Noel Sabatis significantly.

Old Jessie made no objection to going on that mission of healing. She took up the lantern and walked out of the house. The men followed her hurriedly. All three embarked in Pod's canoe. At Pod's landing they saw and examined James Reward's outfit. Pod swore wearily.

"Looks like he'd come to stop quite a spell," he remarked.

They found James lying flat on his back in the bunk, with the loaded rifle beside him and a cigar in his mouth. He smiled at Jessie and Noel.

"Glad you could come, Jessie," he said. "And I'm glad you are still in the land of the living. You were a fine doctor in the old days; and the only one who ever practised on Fisher Creek, I guess. Noel, you look older than your mother. The company you keep has aged you. Jessie, have you got any iodine to put on this bullet hole that father gave me?"

"Got better," she replied. "Got yarbs here. Noel, fetch water. Pod, make fire."

Noel and Pod did as they were told ; and then the old woman ordered them out of the shack. They went. She set water in a saucepan to boil and filled and lit her pipe. She had brought two little canvas sacks full of dried leaves and flowers and thread-like roots with her ; and as soon as the water began to boil she untied one of these sacks and shook a part of its contents into the saucepan. Then she sat down on an empty biscuit-box beside the bunk and looked steadily at the big New Yorker.

" How you grow up, anyhow ? " she asked. " How you don't die long ago ? "

" Heaven only knows," answered James Reward, smiling. " A couple down on the *Tobique* saved me when I first cleared out of here. I was near dead that time. They nursed me and fed me ; but I wouldn't tell my name because I was afraid they would send me back to that old rogue, Pod, and the she-devil who was his wife then. You knew her, Jessie. So I lit out again and reached the big river. I stopped for a day here, a week there. The world has a great many kind people in it, Jessie—but some of the kind folk in this province are terrors to ask questions. So I kept on moving frequently until I struck an old couple on a farm away down the big river. Their own children had all grown up and gone to doctoring or school-teaching or out West. I stopped there three years, working and going to school. It was in those three years that I saw my chance. Those two old people, and the school-teacher, and some books the teacher gave me, taught me that this life wasn't all misery and damnation—except on Fisher Creek. I learned that there were honest and interesting things

to do in the world and that I had the brain and heart to try to do some of them with. When those old people died I went to the States ; and I have been there ever since, busy and happy."

" What you come back for ? " asked the old woman.

" Curiosity, I suppose. Not love for Pod, that's a sure thing."

" Pod mighty bad man—worst that ever live on this country, white or red. That true talk. Mean an' bad. Thief an' killer, him. But he scart of you, Jim. Scart of me, too. Try to kill Noel las' night."

She told all that she knew of that affair. Then she undressed the wounded shoulder, bathed it with the hot and aromatic brew from the stove and re-bandaged it. She unlaced and pulled off the big man's heavy boots. Pod entered the shack and stated his intention of retiring for the night. He said that Noel had gone home.

" You go too," said Jessie. " Git. You no stop here. No good."

Pod looked at the man in the bunk. Jim's eyes were closed.

" Cal'late this here's my house," he whispered.

" Get out ! " cried the man in the bunk. " Shut up and get out ! "

Pod went. He thought of the hole he had dug at the root of the pine stump, for the first time since his son's arrival. He went to the hole now, found it and its contents as he had left them, and returned the earth and the flat stone to their places. Then he visited the big spruce tree and pocketed two of the high-shouldered bottles. Thus equipped he set out for Noel's place.

Pod Reward and Noel Sabatis sat up until dawn, hold-

ing an indignation meeting. The indignation was mostly Pod's, and it was bred of fear. He was afraid of his son and of the things his son stood for in his terrified and guilty mind ; and it did not take him long to shake the heart and fire the brain of Noel Sabatis with his own terror and suspicion. Jim had come back to Fisher Creek for revenge. For what else, in the devil's name ? Would he take his revenge with his own hands, or did he mean to bring the law into play ? It was the mention of the law that dealt the first shock to Noel Sabatis.

" He won't git well, maybe," he suggested.

" Git well ! " exclaimed Pod. " Then we be good as jailed and hanged this very minute. D'ye cal'late his folks don't know where he is ?—and the police too, like as not ?—And if they git me, ye'll come along too."

They tried to hearten themselves with gin. The white liquor failed to give them courage but it inspired them to action. They decided to go up stream—away up into the unmapped wilds—and leave Jim in possession of Fisher Creek. That was the only thing to do (so said the gin), for whether he lived or died he would be the ruin of them if they remained on the creek. They packed Noel's blankets, frying-pan and kettle, axe and rusty steel traps, and the provisions which old Jessie had brought in from the Reservation. Pod asked Noel where his shot-gun was ; and Noel had to admit that his mother had toted it along to Pod's shack and that she was still in possession of it, as far as he knew. Pod was furious, and swore that he'd be driven to investigating the colour and size of Noel's liver and other vital organs one of these days ; and the Maliseet replied in kind, with a logical reference to Pod's rifle ; and the flight into the

wilderness came within an ace of terminating violently there and then. A gin-bred shift of whim saved the situation. They embarked in old Jessie's canoe, which was better than her son's leaky and cranky craft, and slid up stream. At Pod's landing they paused long enough for Pod to transfer to Jim's fine new canoe. That canoe still contained Jim's new blankets and liberal supply of bacon and tinned provisions. Then they poled for dear life, and fear of just punishment for their many misdeeds limbered their stiff muscles and strengthened their lungs.

CHAPTER VII

JUNE'S CONFESSION

JOHN DE LA REWARD and his adopted daughter June reached New York without accident. John called at the offices of Sayle and Sear and asked for Mr. James Reward. James was out of town, but Thomas P. and John S. were in. The visitor sent his card in to Mr. Thomas P. Reward, with a request for a brief interview. It was granted as soon as asked ; and the Englishman was immediately ushered into a comfortable room that had been the private office of James Reward before James had taken over the yet more comfortable room that had been the workshop of the late Robert N. Sayle. The boy closed the heavy door behind the caller.

The savant halted on the edge of the oriental rug, with his carved walking-stick (a gift from the King of Siam) and his wide white hat (symbolical in London and Paris of profound scholarship and the tireless pursuit of knowledge) held together in his left hand and his short-sighted eyes blinking amiably forward. The young man seated at the far side of the big oak table got quickly out of his padded arm-chair and advanced, glancing from his caller to his caller's card and back again.

" I am one of James Reward's sons," he said. " I am

sorry that my father is away. Your name, sir, is—very much like my own."

"Exactly," returned the Englishman. "My name is my excuse for disturbing you. Your father, I believe, is a son of Poddington Reward."

The other invited his visitor to a seat and reseated himself.

"My father has always been reticent on the subject of our family," he said: "He left home at an early age. I believe that he and his father did not get along very well together.

"Extraordinary! I have a letter in my pocket from the old gentleman whom I have every reason to believe to be your grandfather. Your father came from Fisher Creek, in New Brunswick, I think."

"Yes, from New Brunswick—but he has never mentioned Fisher Creek to me. He has always been very indefinite in his answers to our questions. You are not from Fisher Creek, sir, surely? I beg your pardon! Your address is on your card, of course. London. But you said that the name—the similarity of our names—was your reason for calling."

"Exactly. It is my firm belief that we Rewards and de la Rewards are one and the same family—that we are cousins, in fact."

Thomas P. Reward's face brightened with eager interest, then dimmed behind a mask of caution. He turned his eye to the savant's card.

"It is unfortunate that my father is not in town," he said, his gaze still on the pasteboard. "I know nothing about the history of the family."

He was a very decent young man, this Thomas Penny-

father Reward, with heart, intellect and education above the average ; but he knew little of humanity beyond the requirements of his business. The pursuit of his profession had taught him caution and suspicion—excellent qualities in a banker, from the bank's point of view. The practice of caution and suspicion had somewhat dimmed his wider outlook ; and now, as he gazed down at his visitor's card, his thoughts were under the cold, impersonal control of the qualities that made him such an excellent man of business at such an early age. Here was a stranger with a white hat, from London, claiming blood-relationship with the family of James Reward—so ran his suspicious thoughts. This thing had never happened before ; but now that Robert N. Sayle was dead and James Reward was worth a million and something over to his private fortune, the thing had happened. This stranger was evidently a gentleman, judging by his voice and appearance. His dress suggested cleanliness but carelessness. He looked unfashionable but distinguished. But why this de la stuff, if he were a faker ? Why not plain Reward ? One moment ? The de la Reward was a better name for the purposes of—well, of obtaining money under false pretences, for instance. It suggested a real name—something you clung to against your better judgment—a thing to use only because it had been wished on you by fate and your forefathers. Therein lay its subtlety. A dull, uneducated person would have come out flat-footed with a card engraved " Reward." If a middle-aged, distinguished looking man like his visitor really was a cousin, his father would have known of the fact and spoken of it.

The young banker looked up from the card and found

the Englishman's near-sighted, kindly glance fixed quizzically upon him. He blushed and moved uneasily in his big chair—the chair that had so often supported the very considerable weight of the great Robert N. Sayle.

The visitor smiled and stood up.

"It is unfortunate," he said, "I am anxious to see your father. I have heard of him. You, of course—so young and in a position of such trust—cannot be too careful. Don't move, I beg you. Good-morning."

The young man sat motionless for several minutes after the departure of the stranger. Then he rang a bell and asked for *Who's Who*. The fat, red book was brought to him. He turned the pages feverishly. There it was. He read swiftly, with accumulating consternation.

"John de la Reward, M.A., F.R.S." and so on. "Born 1865. *e. s.* late Lt.-Col. P. S. de la Reward, R.A.; Eton; Balliol; Bickford Prizeman; geological survey of Labrador; extensive exploration in Central America; military service with Gen. Nunez Gomez; exploration of Upper Amazon; military service in Bolivia; gold mining in Dutch Guinea; sub-editor *London Moonshine*; Crink expedition to Borneo; British Mission to Siam; exploration in Moamba; military service in Cuba; Royal Geographical Society's Expedition to Greenland; literary work on London; Royal Berkshire Yeomanry, South Africa; exploration of interior of Labrador; extensive travel in China," and so on. "*m.* Matilda, *d.* of Sir Henry Fenwick, Bart," and so on. "Author of 'Undergraduate Verses,' 'The Lark,' 'Jungles of Brazil,' 'The Antiquity of man,' 'The Amazon,' 'Adam's Orchard,' 'Black Warfare,' 'The Invisible World,' 'The Spark in the Skull,' 'The Mystery of Being,' 'God and the Butterflies,' 'Machine-gun Training,' 'Intellectual Adventures,' 'Essay on Romance,' 'Prehistoric Ice,' 'Christ: An Appreciation,' 'The Science of Poetry,' 'Carbine versus Sabre,' and 'Physical Valour and Moral Courage.'"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the young banker. "And I turned him out!"

The heavy volume fell from his hands. He picked it up, laid it open on the table and stared at it. His face was crimson with chargin.

" And I showed him the door," he continued. " Prehistoric ice ! That will be my first and last names, if the girls hear of this. And I thought him a faker. The janitor couldn't have made a worse break. Pure ivory ! I gave him the north exposure, the chilled optics, because he wanted to be my cousin. I'll go and beg his pardon. He is sure to be a good sportsman. Where is he stopping ? "

He found the savant's card, but it did not show a New York address. He sent two men out to investigate the registers of twenty hotels—but his thought and their efforts were alike in vain.

John de la Reward went up town to the home of his old friend Ian MacLean, with whom he and June were staying. He told June that James Reward was not in New York—but he said nothing of his conversation with Thomas, the son of James. The three lunched at home, in a room overlooking a small, green yard containing a green tree. Mr. MacLean was several years older than John, a bachelor, and possessed of considerable worldly gear. He was a mighty hunter ; and he and John had been together in several tight and bizarre corners of the earth. He was a great admirer of John as a man, explorer, soldier and scientist, and a determined reader of him as an author. With the exception of a few standard works on big game, and the catalogues of gun makers and sportsmen's outfitters, his only books were those of John and Colonel Roosevelt. The personal element had a strong influence on Ian's literary appetite. He was not a bookman, but he was a conscientious friend. If a man he knew well and liked well, won a battle, he would study the maps at the earliest opportunity, listen

intently to his friend's detailed account of the action, read every operation order and report, and enthusiastically voice his admiration of the victor and the victory and, if possible, his understanding of the operation. So it was if a friend built a railway or a ship, painted a picture or wrote a book. He would look upon the work, go to great fatigue of body and mind to grasp its spirit as well as its purpose, and praise its creator. He considered the appreciation of the professional activities of his friends to be one of the duties of friendship. In the matter of his friends' literary efforts, just where he had hoped for fair winds and unmistakable landfalls, he had encountered many and increasing difficulties. Even the straightforward Colonel's printed pages had befogged him now and then—but the books of John de la Reward were the great and unfailing source of his mental fatigue and bewilderment; and yet he bought each new book of John's and tackled it like a man and a friend. Most of his off-time—time not employed in shooting and fishing—was given painfully but ungrudgingly to his efforts to appreciate fully the literary results of John's imaginings and speculations.

After luncheon they took their coffee to the library, the men still busy recalling adventures which they had shared on glacial ice and in tropical jungle. The library contained three shelves of books, four glazed cases of guns, tarpon, salmon and trout rods, a tiger's skull, an elephant's tusks, a lion's skin, maps, photographs of a few men and many beasts, antlers of moose and caribou and the head of a musk-ox.

June went straight to the book-shelves, coffee-cup in hand. Mr. MacLean turned from the father to the

daughter, hesitated, squared his shoulders and followed her. He glanced back helplessly at his friend.

" I believe you have every one of Dad's books here," she said.

" I am sure of it," replied Ian. " Jack, come here and tell me if you intend your books to be understood by ordinary fellows like me ? If you don't, that lets me out; but if you do, you'll have to help me, I hate to appear a dunce before this young lady—but will you tell me what this is about. It is called *God and the Butterflies.* I have read it a dozen times, Jack. What is it supposed to be about ? "

John took the volume from his friend's hand, held it close to his eyes and opened it here and there.

" I remember it very well," he said. " It is about butterflies."

" But there are whole chapters in which butterflies are not mentioned."

" Those are about God—as a butterfly would imagine God. It was a very simple effort—almost childish. June, you thought so, too."

" Yes ; and I have always loved it for its simplicity."

" God, as imagined by a butterfly," said Ian MacLean. " That may help. I wish I had known that before. Young Wallace and I were talking about the book last week, and he said that he couldn't make head nor tail of any part of it except the straight entomological stuff."

" What young Wallace do you mean ? " asked June.

" Archer Wallace. He is a major—or was. He went to war with the first contingent of Canadians in the autumn of 1914. You knew his father, Jack. He was

with me when you and I first met. Fellow with a red head and cart-loads of money."

"I remember him—but I know the son, too," said John. A New Yorker, but a Canadian officer. June, it was you who introduced him to me, in the winter of that first year, when the Canadians were on Salisbury Plain."

"Yes, he was a friend of the Wrens," replied June.

"That is strange," said Mr. MacLean. "We talked about your books, Jack, and I talked about you, but he did not say a word to lead me to suspect that he knew you personally. He was greatly attracted by your books, and read bits of them here and there, and said that he felt a queer glow of familiarity with them and yet could not remember having ever seen them before. But he is not entirely his old self, you know. He was wounded."

"I heard of that," said John. "I think you told me of it, June."

"Yes, I told you," she replied. "He was in a London hospital for months. He was very ill apart from his wounds. He lay out for six days among the dead. One of the other officers in his battalion told Mary Wren all about it—a terrible story. He hid all day, day after day, in a mine crater, and crawled about at night looking for food—dead men's rations. He was found and brought in by a patrol from another battalion. He remembered his experiences for a day or two—was haunted by them so that he could not sleep—and then forgot them absolutely."

"Poor devil!" said MacLean. "He is very well physically now, but he is queer. He seems to be all the

time on the edge of remembering something. In the middle of talking he stops suddenly as if he was fumbling about in his memory for something more important than the subject in hand. His brain is right enough, otherwise. He thinks quick as lightning—so quick that he gets ahead of me—and right to the point. But he is queer. Of that there can be no doubt. He admits it."

John had listened attentively to his friend and his daughter, though his eyes had been fixed all the while on a page of *God and the Butterflies*; and now he closed the book on a finger and looked at June.

"I think you knew him better than I did, my dear," he said. "If I remember correctly, you knew him very well—went about with him and that sort of thing. In short, I seem to remember that I used to entertain the belief that he was one of your keen pursuers, dear child."

June laughed lightly, but unsteadily, and blushed. Ian MacLean looked embarrassed but tremendously interested.

"I cannot help feeling that you should have visited him in hospital, dear, and invited him to the house when he was convalescing, or else reminded me to do so. He was a good soldier, a credit to the Army."

"But I told you about it, Daddy, at the time," returned the girl. "It was when you were very busy with that book which you did not finish. I saw him—and he seemed quite well—and he did not know me."

"Lord lov'aduck!" exclaimed Mr. MacLean. "He didn't know you!"

"I apologise, my dear child," said John. "It must be that I did not really hear you at the time. That book—it promised well. I must get back to work on

it. *Dead Generals*—that was the title. Yes, it promised well. I dreamt the first chapter of it, the night after hearing of—of the boy's death. The manuscript is in one of my bags. If you two will be good enough to excuse me until tea-time, I shall go upstairs and write."

He went, and June and Ian remained in the library.

"I did not think young Wallace's memory was as bad as that," said the mighty hunter. Do you mean to tell me that he had no recollection of you, whatever—didn't even *feel* that he had seen you before ?"

"He had forgotten me completely, utterly—even more so than he had forgotten father's books. And I was greatly relieved. It hurt me a little, of course—in more than my vanity ; but it was a very real relief to me. If I tell you something rather extraordinary, Mr. MacLean, will you keep it a secret ? It is something—really almost nothing—that even father does not know."

"Trust me, Miss de la Reward," returned Ian. "I feel highly complimented and deeply touched by this mark of confidence. Tell me your secret, my dear young lady, and I assure you that red-hot pincers would never succeed in pinching it out of me."

"You must promise first that you will never mention me to Major Wallace, or my father, except in connection with his books—that you will not remind Major Wallace of the fact that he ever knew us."

"I promise. Trust me, my dear Miss June. Your secret will be safe."

"I am sure of it, Mr. MacLean ; and I hope you will not be offended at my making a confidant of you in so

unimportant a matter. I—the truth is—in London, during these last four years, I have had a great many—I have received, or avoided with difficulty, a great deal of attention from men. You need not try to look solemn. I'll feel more comfortable—less of a fool—if you laugh. Sailors and soldiers, you know. One could always be rude to civilians who were young enough to be so foolish; and men who were old enough or ill enough to have a right to be civilians had more sense. Sailors and soldiers were the trouble—brave men on leave—people you could not be rude to. Major Archer Wallace was one of them. He became the most devoted of them all, and I think I liked him, or admired him, a little more than any one else—but I liked almost all of them. This sounds idiotic to you; but it is true. Soldiers on leave and sailors on shore *are* idiotic; but one cannot help liking them. Some of them became an awful bother to me; so when Major Wallace was away—he didn't get leave very often—I pretended that I was engaged to him. I didn't say that it was to him, exactly, but that became the general idea. The men didn't ask questions, but the women did, and one girl asked so many that she confused me into almost saying that I was going to marry Archer Wallace after the war. You must understand that he had often asked me to—not after the war, but immediately. I had always refused, of course. I bought myself a ring and wore it on the significant finger. The other soldiers and sailors were awfully decent about it. It saved me a great deal of trouble. I congratulated myself on my cleverness until one day Ada Wren told me that she had written to Major Wallace and incidentally mentioned

our engagement—his engagement and mine. I was furious with her. A few weeks later I got a letter from him. It was an amazing effort. He said that Ada Wren's communication had made him the happiest man on the Western Front and that I was an angel to have relented and that he would be in London in a few weeks. Yes, he believed it—that we were engaged! I did not know what to do; but I told Ada what I honestly thought of her and commanded her—ordered her—to write to him and explain what she had done—the outrageous mistake she had made and the unpardonable impertinence of which she had been guilty. I reduced her to tears; and she promised to write the next day. I did nothing else in the matter except discard the ring. Two more letters came from him, both of which I burned unopened. Several weeks passed; and then we heard that Major Wallace was missing. Later, the news came that he had been recovered, seriously wounded; and, in time, I was told the story of his terrible experience in and around the crater. And after that Ada Wren confessed to me one day that she had not written the second letter to him. So you can imagine how relieved I was when I found that he had forgotten me. That is all, Mr. MacLean."

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed the mighty hunter. "You played with fire, my dear girl, and escaped a burning only by the chance of poor Archer's loss of memory. You were reckless. You say that you did not love him?"

"Not in the least. Never. But I was very fond of him."

"Very fond of him, but not in the least in love with

him ? You are too deep for me, Miss June—like your father's books. But he loved you ? "

" Yes. At least he thought so—seemed to be quite sure of it."

" And what will you do if he suddenly remembers ? "

" There is no danger of that, so long as he is not reminded of it in any way. Otherwise he would have remembered before this. But if that should ever happen, then I shall have to tell him the truth. I think that he would have ceased to care for me by that time, anyway. The brain might flash the picture again, but the heart would have recovered from—from whatever was the matter with it. But whatever happens, I am not engaged to him, nor anything else, and never was."

" You care for some other soldier—or sailor—I think."

" No. Well, not exactly no. I have a suspicion of something."

" Good luck to you, anyway—and let us hope that poor young Wallace never remembers believing himself engaged to you."

CHAPTER VIII

"Not yet have Science, machinery and the perfection of technique eliminated Chance from that deadly game. General X——, the commander of a division of infantry, was in the habit of inspecting his front-line trenches on the second day and sixteenth day of every month. On the second of June he went up to the positions of his forward battalions, accompanied by one of his aides-de-camp and the commanding officer of one of his brigades. It was a perfect summer morning, and birds were singing in Sanctuary Wood . . . The sudden fury of the German bombardment shut them off in a moment, isolated them from their friends and supports as if they were of another and lost world. The aide-de-camp was killed; the brigadier-general was wounded to helplessness; General X—— was partially stunned by the concussions of exploding shells . . . When the German infantry flooded in across the obliterated trenches they did not find a major-general, but an enraged and deadly first-hand killer who had forgotten that the command of a division had ever been his. They dispatched him at last; but he took a life for every wound he received . . . . This was Chance. Why do we pretend to consider belief-in-Chance a superstition? Chance is the natural gap-filler and law-of-all-work that keeps logical sequences of events and the laws of cause and effect in touch with one another. Chance is to natural laws much the same thing as the exception is to the rule." From the unfinished manuscript of *Dead Generals*.

THE heat of creative composition shut the thought of Fisher Creek out of John's head, and kept his body and his adopted daughter in New York for ten days after June's confession to their host. He worked in his room every morning and every afternoon, appeared at the dinner-table in high spirits and refused to quiet down before midnight. The morning and afternoon entertainment of June devolved on Ian MacLean,

greatly to his satisfaction. She kept his mind off John's books. After dinner the three went about together, on the wheels of quick whims instead of laborious plans ; and still the Press and the public remained in ignorance of the fact that this explorer of middling distinction was in their midst, and the intellectuals suspected nothing of the proximity of the author of *The Spark in the Skull*, and Thomas P. Reward sought his lost cousin in vain. Thomas employed a detective ; but what chance has a detective against that natural law of accident which we call Chance ?

In the meantime, Captain Robert Sayle, M.C., and his man Tom Snicken (late 563298, Pte. Snicken, Thos.) arrived in New York, on their way to Fisher Creek. Bob did not feel socially inclined. He wanted to have a word with James Reward and then shove along on his own affair of moonshine. He did not want to see or talk to his family or that of James Reward. He had neither father nor mother to go to now, and his sisters were rich and married, and rich again, and doubtless busy and happy, and doubtless full of pity for him, of adverse criticism of his recent ways of life, and of curiosity concerning his affairs. He knew that they would pity him because of his disinheritance and that he would feel humiliation—a false humiliation—an ignoble reflection of their pity for his dismillioned condition. That he could not stand for, he would not risk. He had no reason—in this connection, at least—to feel humiliation or shame. If he felt any shame for this affair, it was not for his own part in it. He had been disinherited because of the finest actions of his life. He had been misunderstood and disowned because of his

years of armed championship of the world's freedom against Hunnish might and ferocity, and his stand for personal freedom against paternal authority and blandishment. He was proud of these things. To feel humiliation for them would be like denying his colonel, or refusing duty, or failing to support a comrade in a tight corner. But what did his unmuddied, unraided, full-fed, self-satisfied, bemillioned sisters know of these things, if even his father had gone in ignorance of their high significance?

He went to the offices of Sayle & Sear and was informed by a clerk that Mr. James Reward was out of town and that the date of his return was not a certainty. This was no sort of shock to Bob and no set-back to his plans. He bought a number of maps on his way back to his hotel, and on his arrival there warned Snicken to have things ready for a move next morning. He decided not to call on any of his old friends; for here in his native city he felt the paltriness of pecuniary inheritance as if his boots were already worn down at the heels. After lunch he went out for an aimless walk, with just an afternoon and a night of New York ahead of him. He believed that his changed appearance would save him from recognition by mere acquaintances. He strolled around Gramercy Park, smoking cigarettes. From there he wandered into Fifth Avenue. He was looking in a crystal window at a display of luxurious books, and thinking of his own small but excellent library boxed away in London, when he presently became aware of the scrutiny of a man in a grey suit who had halted beside him. He glanced at the stranger, and the stranger instantly gazed into the window. He returned this

glance to the books and the other immediately looked sidewise at him again.

"Old soldier," said Bob without turning his head.

"Surest thing in the world," said the man in grey. "Same to you."

They faced each other, smiling cautiously. The smiles expanded.

"Don't tell me," said the man in grey. "I'll place you in two ticks."

"I haven't got it yet, myself," returned Bob. "Spring of '17? Yes, that's it. I met you once—night, I think. Yes, it was at night, and during a scrap. You are a Canadian? That's it. I was on our left flank, and the Canadians were on our left, on the ridge."

"You have it. Those memories come back to me—the fighting memories—by degrees. You had the company on my right. So you are English?"

"No, I am a New Yorker, but I was an Englishman for military purposes—Essex Regiment. I was in London when the war started."

"I am of this old town, too; but I went over with the first lot of Canadians. Wallace is my name—Archer Wallace; and now I have you clear. We brought our flanks into touch in a shell-hole, d'you remember?—and you were bleeding at the neck, but didn't seem much hurt, and one of your chaps died in that hole and I filled my cigarette-case from a box you had in your pack. And here you are on the avenue—and not a drop of blood in sight! This calls for something, old son! This is an occasion!"

"It is; and how are we to observe it? My name's

Sayle, and I landed yesterday and am going north tomorrow. What about a re-union dinner ? "

The result of this suggestion was a dinner at the club where Major Wallace lived. It took place in a private room. The diners were eight in number, and Bob Sayle was the guest of honour. With one exception, all had been actively and forwardly engaged in the Great War. Two were junior officers of the United States Navy ; one was a very young Scotsman, a major, late of the Royal Air Force, with three wound-stripes, the D.S.O., M.C. and Legion of Honour, a proud and wealthy aunt in New York and only one leg ; two were subalterns of the Seventh Division, A.E.F., and two were Captain Robert Sayle, M.C., late of the Essex Regiment, and Major Archer Wallace, D.S.O., late Canadian Infantry. Mr. Ian MacLean, that mighty hunter, was the exceptional civilian. Had Wallace known of Ian's guests, John de la Reward would have been there, too ; but you may be sure that the hunter said nothing to the major about the de la Rewards. The dinner was a success. The stories increased in force, and the conversation in wit, as the dinner progressed. Ian MacLean told some of his most exciting adventures with lions and tigers and wild pigs in such a thrilling style that the representatives of the Seventh Division felt their scalps crawl, and the eyes of the Scot who had officially crashed twelve Boche 'planes stuck out with horror, and Bob Sayle was thankful that his spacious youth and adventurous spirit had never led him into that perilous field of sport. It was late when the party came to an end.

CHAPTER IX

STRANGERS ON FISHER CREEK

IN spite of the skill and care of the ancient squaw, Jessie Sabatis, the wound in James Reward's shoulder behaved very badly. Although the bullet-hole itself looked well enough for a few days, the patient's temperature went up. Just how high it went Jessie did not know, for she was not equipped with a clinical thermometer. After the first fifty hours of her administration, when James began to talk wildly and flutter his hands, she would gladly have sent to the settlements for a doctor if there had been anyone to send. She could not find hair nor hide, high or low, of her son or Pod Reward. She went to Noel's place in search of them ; and when she saw how the cabin had been cleared of provisions, and her canoe and James' canoe and outfit taken, she understood something of what had happened. That devil, Pod, had run away, taking poor weak Noel along with him. Poor, harmless Noel! She did not waste a thought on the direction of their flight. What mattered it to her, or to the sick man, whether they had fled up stream or down, so long as they were not to be found when she needed them ? Had she found them, immediately on the heels of the

discovery that they were gone, murder would have been done on Fisher Creek as suddenly and convincingly as it had ever been done there or elsewhere.

She fought Jim's fever with herb teas, sometimes hot and as often cold, and continued to bathe the wound with brews and compresses of roots and leaves. She never left the side of her patient's bunk for more than fifteen or twenty minutes at a time, day or night, and then only to get fresh water from the spring or to get fresh herbs. She was so old and seasoned that she did not seem to need much sleep, and the little that she had to have she took in the form of cat-naps. Jim's lowest mutter of words, or the slightest movement of his hot head or restless hands, always brought her wide awake. She was a nurse by instinct as well as by long, though unprofessional, training; and now she spared no effort or fatigue or thought to bring the case in hand to a successful issue. This was largely for James Reward's sake, and partly for the sake of Noel Sabatis. She was afraid. She believed that if James Reward were to die of that wound, the might of the law would come thundering and prying up Fisher Creek, asking awkward questions and proving awkward crimes and digging up awkward pasts. She feared for Noel. He was a reticent fellow—but he had lived a long time.

Summer came hot and hasty; and mosquitoes, and flies of various sorts, became extraordinarily active. But old Jessie sat tight and fought the flies with "smudges" and the fever with brews of herbs. So five days and nights passed, and in that time she did not see any other human being than her patient. No sign or sound from the runaways. Jim was sane every

day from his mid-morning awaking until well past noon ; but when his mind was clear enough for thought and speech he was almost too weak to articulate. His diet was extremely low, for there was no milk on Fisher Creek and no beef or mutton for the making of broth. All the nourishment he got was in the botanical concoctions she poured down his unresisting throat. I have an idea that the old squaw knew pretty nearly exactly what she was about. Whenever Jim demanded large platters full of fried bacon and pancakes she was as deaf as a post ; and when she cooked square meals for her own consumption she did so at a fire outside, so as to spare him the excitement of the odours.

The shoulder became inflamed and swollen and the pain of it went up the neck and down to the finger-tips—but the old medicine-woman did not lose heart or faith in the cooling and healing virtues of her wild herbs. She increased the frequency of the bathings and the strength of the poultices. She had cooled the fires and reduced the swellings of more formidable hurts than this. Her science, learned from her grandmother, was as old as the race. It exceeded her store of medicinal properties by a great deal—as did her experiences as a practitioner, also. For instance, she had brought back to a healthy condition worse wounds than this one by the use of the root of a rare swamp plant called Gluskap's-hand ; but not a fragment of this root was in her possession and she could not see any way of obtaining it.

Six nights after the night of the wounding of James Reward, when the last red flake of the sun's rim had subsided behind the black hills and the clear twilight

was dusking to amber, a canoe nosed the mud on Pod Reward's front, and two men stepped ashore. The man who had occupied the bow of the canoe was sandy, of medium height, slender and wore a brown glove on his left hand. He moved his fore-arm woodenly. The other was taller and broader than his companion, but lean enough. They pulled the canoe out of the current and took the path leading to the shack, the taller in front. The door of the shack was open ; and old Jessie saw them when they issued from the fringe of alders at the top of the bank. She was holding a mug to her patient's lips at the time, and she did not withdraw the mug or change her position by an inch.

Bob Sayle halted on the threshold and peered into the cabin.

" Good evening," he said.

" Howdy," returned the ancient squaw.

" Somebody ill ? Somebody sick ? " he asked, widening his gaze against the dusk of the little interior and stooping forward.

" Yes. You doctor, maybe ? Come in," she said.

Bob shook his head but advanced a few paces into the cabin.

" Who the devil have you there ! " he exclaimed, staring at the man in the bunk. " Good heavens, is it James Reward ? Mr. Reward, is it you ? "

" Yes, James Reward—of New York," answered the big man. " Here I am. Accident. Sick. Nice place —to be sick in. But who are you ? I know you—yes, very well. Voice very familiar. Can't see you. Come closer—and let me have a look at you. Bob Sayle ! Or is it fever ? Is it you, Bob ? "

" Of course it is, Jim. It's Bob Sayle, as sure as you are born. My hat ! Your hand is as hot as a coal. And your shoulder, Jim ? Wounded, by thunder ! This is all a mystery to me. I asked for you in New York, at the office. They said you were out of town, but they didn't mention the woods. I hadn't the ghost of an idea you were here—here, of all places in the world. What has happened to you, Jim ?—and what's the game? —and who is your lady friend ? "

" She is Jessie Sabatis, my doctor and nurse. Came in here last week and got hurt first thing—shot through the shoulder. Born here, you know—long time ago. Came to see my old man. Glad you came, Bob—for I was afraid you were feeling sore. Must talk to you to-morrow—and explain everything—about that will, you know. I'm your friend, Bob."

" I never doubted it, Jim. Now you had better keep quiet, hadn't you, and go to sleep or something. We can talk to-morrow."

" Yes, in the morning. Feeling a bit buzzy now—creamy and vague in the head. Not uncomfortable. Rather pleasant, in fact. Don't-give-a-damn sort of feeling. But I'd like to know what brought you here, Bob. Who told you I was here ? Did you say they told you at the office ? "

" No I hadn't the ghost of a thought that you were here. I didn't come up here looking for you—but I am glad I have found you. Please go to sleep now, there's a good fellow. See you in the morning."

Jim protested thickly, but Bob retired from the cabin and joined Tom Snicken outside. The two ex-military men went down to their canoe and pitched their tent

close beside the stream. They made a fire, and Tom set to work with frying-pan and coffee-pot. When the bacon was curling at the edges and attracting with its fragrance all the winged things of the wilderness, old Jessie appeared and requested tobacco. She said that Jim Reward's cigars had no snatch to them. Bob had tobacco of several varieties—the kinds he and Tom smoked, and other kinds to give away. Jessie took a cake of one of the other kinds—a black and succulent mixture admirable alike for slow combustion in a pipe and for slow mumbling between sparsely toothed jaws. She sat down by the fire, filled her pipe and looked contemplatively at the frying-pan.

"After an hour's rest, I shall start down stream to get a doctor from the settlements for Mr. Reward," said Bob.

The ancient squaw shook her head.

"Don't go to-night," she replied. "Wait one, two day—then go for doctor, maybe. Me, Jessie Sabatis, one damn fine doctor. Go hunt new medicine to-night —mighty good medicine—an' you nurse Jim how I tell you. Nurse Jim all the time, no time to hunt medicine. Find good medicine to-night, maybe—Gluskap's-hand. Make Jim well one, two day. Cure heap worse fever an' worse shot-hole with him plenty time. You wait."

Bob was sceptical of the old dame's abilities as a medical practitioner, but by the time all the bacon from the pan was consumed and the coffee pot emptied, she had talked him into trusting her both as a doctor and a woman. He possessed the open mind and the open heart, as we already know. So he went to the shack and

attended to the sick man according to her instructions, and she went into the woods with a little basket, a short belt-axe and a lantern.

Before the open door of the shack burned a clear fire of dry wood for illuminating purposes and a smudge to keep the flies and mosquitoes away. The smudge—a core of fire banked with damp moss and sods—span and spread a cloud of choking smoke that burned the less courageous of the invading insects, dazed the others and almost strangled Bob and his patient. Jim Reward awoke delirious after a short sleep. He tossed from side to side and gabbled incoherently. Bob bathed his face and gave him plenty of herb-tea to drink, according to instructions. The bitter smoke from the smudge became sickening, and Bob felt sure that the torture of it increased Jim's fever. At last he closed the door tight, shutting out the light as well as the smoke. It was a windless, hot night. Now that the door was shut the little cabin became like a moderate oven—an oven just right for baking without burning. The darkness seemed to add weight to the heat. Old Jessie had warned Bob that there were no candles in the place before departing with the only lantern. Bob stripped himself to his thinnest shirt and sat very still, smoking. The perspiration ran down him, front and back, in tickling trickles. The sick man babbled and tossed and sighed.

" I can't stand this ! " exclaimed Bob at last. " Better be strangled than suffocated and baked."

He pulled open the door and let the heavy smoke crawl in. He sat down beside the door, and there Tom Snicken joined him.

" I never saw such gnats before in all my life, sir,"

said Tom. "They have taken the tent and consolidated their position. Some of 'em prod as with baynits and some slash as with knobkerries and others bite like dogs. I handed over the tent, sir, without waiting for a receipt, and left them eating it. They don't seem to be operating in such force here."

"What you need is a smudge," said Bob. "Come along and I'll make one for you. You must get your sleep, old thing, or you'll go sick before you become accustomed to this sort of life."

He made a smudge in the tent that for sheer offensiveness beat anything of the kind ever before known in that country. The borers and biters fled. Then Bob extinguished the smoulder of rotted leaves, laced Tom in for the night and returned to the shack.

In the meantime old Jessie Sabatis cruised the woods, with the lantern glowing beside her like a big fire-fly. In every low, damp spot where alders grew she paused frequently, stooping and peering. Flies and mosquitoes blunted their nippers and beaks on her bark-like skin. She interrupted much good hunting, awoke many shy birds in their secret coverts, almost stepped on the brush of a fox and started a big moose from his bed of Indian willows. She sought a swamp in which she had found specimens of the rare, fever-allaying plant called Gluskap's-hand many long years ago. Her progress was slow and at times she felt doubtful about the course to take, for that particular swamp was small, she had never before sought it at night, and many of the landmarks by which she might have recognized the way had changed or vanished under the recurring floods of life and death to the wilderness. A sense of uncertainty, of bewilder-

ment, awoke in her heart and grew. The truth is she was tired, body and brain. Years of easy living on the Reservation had softened her, and the days and nights of work and anxiety over James Reward had discovered that fact to her. Her great spirit had suffered, too. For the first time in her long life she felt dread of the rayless night and of the pathless wilderness.

For the fifth time a damp, lush, alder-choked hollow raised old Jessie's hopes ; and for the fifth time her hopes were dashed by the discovery that the swamp of Gluskap's-hand was not yet reached. The fifth death to her hopes was one tragedy too many for her philosophy. She sank down in the tangle of sappy things, on the cool black mud, and wept like a child, careless and forgetful of the dignity of her wisdom and her great age. The lantern, which had been let fall rather than set down, swayed drunkenly for a second or two, then toppled and rolled over. She withdrew a hand from her face for the recovery of the lantern, which lay against a clump of pulpy stems ; and as she sat on its base she saw, by its murky gleam, the pale, drooping, mis-shapen bloom of the plant she sought.

In Pod Reward's clearing on the creek, Bob Sayle continued to do battle against heat and flies and smoke, and at the same time to perform his duty towards James Reward. James did nothing to make the matter easier. He was never at once quiet and silent for more than ten minutes at a time. He demanded drink frequently, sometimes in tones of cool sanity and at other times in a voice of delirium. Bob drained mugfuls of herb tea into him, according to his instructions, moistened the dressing on his shoulder and bathed his head and face.

He talked a great deal, in a variety of voices and manners, so that Bob was never quite sure when he was speaking seriously and when wildly—when the man talked or when the fever. For much of the time he seemed content with his monologue; but every now and again he addressed himself pointedly to Bob and demanded a reply, mistaking him always for someone else.

"What good is your money to you now?" he said, talking very fast. "You don't work for it, but you still worry about it—you have so much that you don't even know what it looks like—and you pay me thirty thousand a year to help you keep track of it. Does a cheque for a million look like a million dollars? Not on your life. A million dollars is carts full of gold. But I tell you, a man who fights for others thinks for himself. You had more common sense twenty-five years ago than you have now. You think that you can't be wrong. Isn't that so? You think that you are always right. Isn't that so? Why don't you answer me?"

"Perfectly true," said Bob. "Take a sip of this."

"It's a lie!" cried the sick man; and then he drained the mug which Bob held to his hot lips, sighed, sunk back and kept quiet for a few minutes.

When he spoke again it was about his father.

"That old bird is scared of me," he said. "He needn't be. He is a bad old fellow, Jessie, but I wouldn't hurt a hair of his vile old head. He tried to kill me—but I was too smart for him. I was always too smart for him—and for that woman, too. What was he digging for, I wonder."

Bob dozed and his chin sank upon his chest.

"Wake up!" exclaimed the man in the bunk.

"Wake up and listen to me. Life has been too easy for you. It has been made for you by a good tailor—like a suit of clothes. And you'll never tear that suit, nor get it rumpled even. Trust you to keep it spick and span and correct. You are great comforts to your mother both of you—but you lose something."

"What do I lose?" asked Bob, trying to keep his mind alert against the deafening attacks of sleep and smoke.

"Who are you?" returned the sick man, briskly.

"I am Bob Sayle."

"Bob Sayle. Young Bob. Well, I like you—but you have played the devil with your six million dollar suit of clothes. You were right. It was made too small for you. I'd have ripped it myself in the circumstances. But trust me, I'll bring the old man around to your way of looking at things. Don't think that I am a party of this game of fixing up a wife for you when you're not looking. I give you my word I'll not have anything to do with it. I am not looking for big money in the family—not for a cent more than I can make myself; and I tell you, Bob is not the kind to stand for that sort of thing. You must be blind and mad to think you can put anything like that over on him. Do you imagine you can frighten him into it? Frighten nothing!"

"Do you know me? Are you really saying something, Jim, or are you just talking through your hat?"

"My hat. Where's my hat? Gimme my hat. I must go out and look for old Pod. He is my father, you know. Gimme a drink, Jessie."

A breath of cool air drifted across the wilderness from

the first narrow slit of the glass-clear dawn along the east. It flooded softly into the shack and put Jim Reward to sleep. Bob Sayle filled his lungs with it a dozen times, then slid to the floor and slept like a log.

When Bob awoke the sun was high and old Jessie Sabatis was working over the rusty stove. Bob sat up and yawned, and Jessie turned and looked at him with bright eyes.

"Found 'um," said the old squaw. "Found 'um, Gluskap's-hand. Now you git out."

Bob obeyed. He joined Tom Snicken, who had breakfast ready for him down by the creek.

CHAPTER X

A GOD'S GIFT

JESSIE SABATIS got the big medicine to work by noon, and its superior healing and soothing qualities began to make themselves evident in Jim Reward's condition within twelve hours' time. Bob saw with relief and amazement and gave up all thought of returning to the settlements for a doctor. He hung about the shack and watched the old squaw brew and apply her magical drinks and lotions.

Jessie made use of every part of the plants which she had brought from the little swamp. She boiled the leaves and roots separately—the pulpy green stems with the leaves—and skimmed both vessels constantly as they boiled. The leaf-tea was soon ready, and without waiting for it to cool she poured a little of it into a mug, diluted it with one of her commoner brews and administered the dose to her patient. She repeated the dose in two hours. The decoction of roots was not to her liking until close upon sunset. Then she skimmed it for the last time, and poured it from the stew-pan into an earthen bean-jar with a cover. She carried the jar out to the spring among the willows and cooled it quickly by submerging it to the brim in the ice-cold

water. She bathed Jim's wound with this pungent and amber liquor.

Bob and Tom retired to their tent early, and Bob slept heavily until near midnight; a shift of air trailed the smoke of the smudge away from the tent, and Bob was awakened and driven into the open by the combined activities of black-flies, mosquitoes and bite-um-no-see-ums. He went to the shack and found Jessie in the act of dressing Jim's wound again. She glanced up at his entrance but did not pause in her work. When she had bathed the shoulder thoroughly, back and front, she stooped and took two long, waxen blooms from a nest of damp moss beneath the bunk.

" What time you make 'um ? " she asked.

Bob looked at his watch.

" Three minutes past twelve," he said.

She placed the blossoms on the wounds, one where the bullet had entered the shoulder and one where it had come out, and bound them in place with a bandage steeped in the potent liquor.

" That fix 'im," she said. " Draw all the poison."

" Is it magic or medicine ? " asked Bob.

" Good medicine," she replied. " Best in the world. Don't know 'um where you come from, hey ? "

He assured her that he had never seen nor heard of such medicine where he came from, and begged her to tell him all about it. She lit her pipe, seated herself in the open doorway in the reek of a moderate smudge and told what she knew of Gluskap's-hand. This is the substance of what she told :

Gluskap, the god of the Maliseets in the olden days, spent most of his time with his people and very little of

it with his brother gods. He loved human beings more than the mighty folk of his own kind. For hundreds and hundreds of years he lived with his people summer and winter, but in so many different forms and shapes that they did not often recognize him as a god. He loved peace and such simple things as the smell of cooking-fires and the telling of stories in the lodges of bark on winter nights ; but he fought many battles on the earth and in the air, for he was ever the champion of the weak against the strong. Sometimes he took upon himself the form of a mighty warrior and went and killed evil magicians who plotted against his people. In the first days of the world, for hundreds of years, he was the god of the beasts and birds, as well as of the humans throughout all this country. In those days the beasts were many times as large as they are now. They did not hunt and kill one another, for Gluskap fed all mouths of beast and man in those good days, and they did not fight, for that wickedness was not born in those good days, and they did not fight, for that wickedness was not born in their hearts. After centuries, evil folk-magicians and little gods and the like whispered to some of the great beasts that they were mighty and the masters of the earth. At this thought, which they allowed their minds to dwell upon, their hearts grew proud. They fell upon their lesser brethren and hunted the sons of men into narrow caverns. Then Gluskap came home from an expedition to the south and told the great beasts of the error of their ways ; but the hearts of the beasts were high and hard, and their brains were clouded, for they had tasted blood and power. So they laughed at the words of Gluskap, each in his own terrible voice.

Thereupon the Master grew to twice the height of a pine tree, and as wide in the shoulders as a hill, and the feathers of his crest were like red maples, and his eyes were like fire and ice, and with his right hand as big as a canoe of the sea-voyaging Micmacs he smote the great beasts on the neck and nose. The beasts felt a melting in their bones and chill in their blood. Their legs failed them and pride slid out of their hearts. They dwindled, tottered, shivered and shrank—and so diminished to the statures possessed by their kinds in this day.

Hundreds of years passed, and ages went over the world like the shadows of clouds, and the power of Gluskap's enemies grew with the ageing of things, for wickedness and hate were ever on the increase. The Master withheld his anger and scorn from nothing that was evil, from no one who menaced the happiness of his people. He angered many mighty ones—crafty magicians and unscrupulous gods. The subtleties of his enemies drew strong and tight around him, and at last he saw that he must soon be overthrown and his power suspended for a thousand years. So he made a gift of healing for his people which would remain with them while he lay asleep and powerless under the weight of the black mountain. When his hands were moist with sweat he took black loam between his palms and rolled it and worked it until a part of his life passed into it, and this he thrust into the soft earth with his finger. He did this in six score swampy places; and everywhere, on the next midnight, a pale green plant came up and unfolded its long, pale bloom. And this is Gluskap's-hand, the greatest medicine in the world. Not only does it cure the ills and hurts of the body, but lovers and warriors

and hunters who find its pale flower by night are armed against misadventure by the gentle magic of the sleeping Master.

Bob left James Reward sleeping and old Jessie smoking her pipe and still meditating on the goodness and greatness of Gluskap. He went back to the tent, readjusted the smudge and fell asleep.

James Reward's condition showed marked improvement next day, and Bob and Tom felt free to leave the vicinity of the cabin for hours at a time. Bob was puzzled at not seeing or hearing anything of John de la Reward and his daughter—but he did not question Jessie Sabatis. He guessed the truth that they were breaking their journey in New York. So he went fishing.

On the morning of the third day after the finding of the big medicine by Jessie, the sick man was able to sit up in his bunk and augment his diet of herb teas with malted milk from Bob's elaborate store of provisions. He was thin but cool, and his eyes were clear. His calm eyes looked out upon a calm world over a tangle of whiskers. He drank malted milk; and with the mug still clutched in his thin hand he demanded pancakes and trout fried with bacon. Jessie promised him soup in a day or two.

"Soup! I am full of soup," he retorted. "What's all this stuff I've been swilling ever since I got here but soup? Do you mean broth?—something with a foundation to it—with meat in it? Something of that kind wouldn't be hard to take. Make it good and thick, Jessie, with lumps of meat in it, for I am sick and tired of bilge. But where will you get the meat in this

place, at this time of year? Better gimme bacon. Bob, do you think a feed of bacon and trout and pancakes would hurt me?"

"Yes, I do," replied Bob. "It would kill you. But even if I thought it wouldn't hurt you I wouldn't tell you so, Jim, for I am not a doctor and Jessie is. She is the doctor who has saved your life, old son—and she is boss in this camp. So you be good."

"But I'm hungry, I tell you—hungry. I'm empty. My tummy hollers for something to work on. What's the sense of saving me from death by fever and a bullet hole and then starving me to death? I want to chew on something—something I can feel with my teeth. I'm dead sick of stuff that slips down my throat like nothing at all."

"Don't be childish, Jim. This heroic old girl has pulled you through, or almost through, a very serious illness, at great inconvenience and discomfort to herself, and here you are yowling and whining about being hungry, as if nobody else in the world had ever felt hunger. Pull yourself together, Jim, or I'll shift camp."

"Shift camp! Well, what of it? You didn't come here to look for me or after me—didn't know I was here, you said. I'd like to know what brought you to this forsaken hole. It's the last place on earth I ever thought to see you in."

Bob smiled and came to a sudden decision. He had intended to ask Reward if he knew anything of the two people whom he had followed from London; and now he decided that he would not so much as mention the names of these people to James Reward.

"I am here, anyway, so you'll have to make the best

of me," he said. "I won't go away before I am ready to, you can bet on that; and I am entirely at your service in the meantime. When Jessie says you can add weight and kick to your diet, then I'll get something for her to put in the soup if I have to break every game law in the province."

He turned to Jessie.

"Have you anything to shoot with?" he asked.

She showed him Pod Reward's rifle and Noel's duck-gun.

Two days later Bob went up stream, with bacon and tea enough for a couple of days, his fishing rod and Pod's rifle. He started before sunrise, alone, leaving Tom Snicken behind to help the ancient squaw look after the convalescent millionaire. It was his intention to find and kill red meat for Jim's consumption. He did not like his mission, for he looked upon the breaking of game laws as a most unsportsmanlike proceeding. He kept close in-shore poling up easy water, by noon he came to white water and was forced to make a long portage. He boiled his kettle and rested at the head of the portage. He lay on dry moss and looked out over the sunlit stream and thought of the moonshine that had brought him so far. He wondered if following the moonshine had brought him any nearer to the moon. He felt satisfied that it had in spirit, even if it had not in body. But why worry? He knew that the first glimpse of her would not have been granted to him if the fates had not intended that he should find her some day for ever. It is a fine thing to know—and Bob knew. Even reason cannot stand against knowledge.

Bob lay on the dry moss and stared unseeing across

the stream ; and what with the sunshine in his eyes and the moonshine in his head and heart he came unknowingly to the verge of sleep. His chin settled deep in the cupped palms of his hands. His lids drooped, lifted with a start, flickered and drooped again. He did not know that his field of vision had changed, had been shortened to the curtain of his closed lids, for he continued to see pictures that were more vivid and alive and real than the white and black water breaking under the wash of yellow sunlight. He saw pictures of London against the screen of his closed eye-lids.

Something struck against his left leg and brought him back from London in a breathless, flashing fragment of a second. He turned over and sat up in less time than you can say it, and saw a small bit of grey stone on the moss beside him. He looked swiftly up at the steep, bushy face of the bank above the portage and saw a little spurt of loose earth still trickling. A spot on the surface of a thicket of young spruces became still, even as he stared at it.

Bob got to his feet without moving his gaze from the front of the brushy covert above him.

" Who is there ? " he called. " Who is up there in the bushes ? "

No one answered. Nothing stirred. The broken white and black waters of the rapid, and two black and yellow butterflies on a grey rock, seemed to be the only living things in that sunshiny world.

If it is a man, why does he hide ; and if it is an animal, what kind of animal can it be, wondered Bob. He became suddenly conscious of the daunting loneliness of flooding sunlight over miles and miles of wild wood and

hill and rocky waste under the sheer blue arc of an empty sky. He took up the stone that had struck his leg and threw it with force into the thicket near the top of the bank. It sank in the dense green as in deep water, and nothing happened. He found a larger stone and hurled it at the same wide target, with the same disconcerting lack of result. No one spoke. Nothing slipped furtively, or broke violently, from cover.

"It was something bigger than a fox," said Bob. "A bear, very likely, that was on its way down to fish when I woke up and scared it."

He had made the portage in two trips, carrying the canoe in the first and his dunnage in the second. His possessions lay beside him now on the narrow, sloping terrace between the stream and the rugged upper bank. His blankets and provisions and rubber ground-sheet were in a heap with the rifle and encased fishing-rod lying across them. He lifted the canoe by the middle bar and without shouldering it carried it down to the smooth water above the break of the rapid. There he deposited it on a strip of level shingle. He turned to go back for the dunnage, took one step and then stood motionless, staring.

Beside the blankets and grub stood an old man looking down at him. The old man held the rifle lightly balanced in his two hands. He was a middle-sized, deep chested, sloping shouldered, bandy-legged old man. His eyes were small and unnaturally bright and his face was wild, with whiskers of a soiled grey tint. No wonder Bob stood still and stared.

"Don't ye move hand or foot, or I'll shoot a hole through yer eternal gizzard," said the stranger.

The voice broke the spell of astonishment that had held Bob for a few seconds. His face flushed with indignation, his muscles relaxed and he drew a deep breath. He advanced a pace—and up came the rifle. He halted.

"Move agin—move another inch—and I shoot!" cried the old man.

"Who the devil are you?" asked Bob.

"Never ye mind. Ye know who I be—for it's me ye've come up for. Ye gotter travel by night to cotch me, young feller. Stand straight thar an' I'll whistle for a friend to come an' tie ye up all safe an' handy for takin' into camp. But if ye move agin ye're dead meat!"

He whistled piercingly on his fingers.

"I didn't come up here for you," said Bob. "I came to kill a deer for a sick man who has to eat red meat—so if you are a game warden you know it now and can collect the fine as soon as I get the deer."

"Ye're a liar," replied the other, and whistled again.

Bob jumped and fell forward up the rocky slope, beating the explosion of the rifle by a fraction of second. He came up again like a jack-in-the-box within a yard of the old man and fell upon him like an overgrown wild cat. His speed was bewildering. The old man found a hand of iron on his windpipe and another on the rifle before he could realise what had happened. What chance had the old braggart then, with all his trickery and hardihood and knowledge of rough-and-tumble? Not a ghost of a chance. No more chance than if a whole battalion of the Essex Regiment—rifles, bombs and Lewis-guns—was after him. He staggered like one caught in a whirlwind. His knees buckled and

down he went with the terrible young man on top of him—all over him.

And then his whistle was answered by 140 pounds of live Maliseet on the back of his antagonist's neck.

In three minutes they had Bob Sayle bound hand and foot. His scalp and face bled a little in spots, but he was conscious and unsubdued. In a voice of awful calm he told his captors what would happen to them some day if they didn't unbind him immediately. They listened attentively ; and even old Pod Reward was impressed. As for Noel Sabatis, he trembled in his moccasins. But they decided to take chances on the future rather than the present. His promise to accompany them quietly if they unbound him now, did not satisfy them. So they took him by the heels and head and carried him down to his own canoe. Noel embarked with him, and Pod brought another canoe from the bushes, and all went up stream against the strong, smooth water.

CHAPTER XI

A LETTER TO ALICE REWARD

WHEN James Reward heard that Bob Sayle had gone up-stream in search of a deer, his first sensation was of delight—but his second was of annoyance. Thought of fresh venison made his mouth water and all the pap-fed tissues of his body stir with eagerness—but his mind now had a need and a use for Bob, which did not fall in exactly with the body's craving for red meat.

Ever since Gluskap's-hand had got the better of the fever in his blood and the fire in his arm, his mind had been dealing with the matter of Bob's disinheritance; and last night, while old Jessie slept on the floor like a tired dog, he had written a letter to his daughter, Alice. He had put this letter in an inner and an outer envelope, and had addressed the first to Alice and the second to the office in Fulton Street. Now he wanted Bob to take the letter down to the post office at Plaster Rock. He was impatient for it to reach his daughter's hand.

The letter was the result of much clear, deep and kindly thought. He now felt himself to be more than ever Bob's friend and admirer; he wanted Bob to have every cent of the fortune that had once been intended for him; and after considering the obvious way of

bringing this about from every angle, and with an open mind, he honestly believed the obvious way to be the best way. It was what Bob's father had intended—but the senior Sayle had used heavy-handed and bone-headed methods.

He did not mention Bob Sayle in the letter for he knew Alice almost as well as he loved her. He told her where he was, that he had suffered illness and an accident, from both of which he was recovering brilliantly, and that he wanted her to join him in the woods. He told her what to bring in the way of outfit, how to get to Plaster Rock, and to expect a man and canoe to meet her there on the morning of the tenth day from the date of the letter. "The man will wait until you arrive or a letter comes from you, so hurry along, but don't worry," he wrote. "Don't say a word about who you are or where you are bound for to the people in the village. Tell your mother I am having a good time."

"Why didn't he tell me he was going shooting to-day," he complained to old Jessie, after he had breakfasted on malted milk. "This letter is important—and one day more or less of starvation doesn't matter to a starving man. Why the devil didn't he go after deer two days ago? Bet he doesn't shoot anything fit to eat, anyway!"

"Tom take your letter, maybe," suggested the squaw.

James shouted through the open door for Tom Snicken, who came into sight from the direction of the tent with a slice of buttered toast in one hand. At a dagger glance from Jessie he concealed the toast behind his back.

"What have you had for breakfast, Tom?" asked Mr. Reward.

"A trifle of bacon, sir, and a little trout or two," said Tom.

"Oh, a little trout or two! And some buttered toast, what?"

"Yes, sir, a slice of toast. The butter isn't very good."

"Jessie, why the devil can't I have a slice of toast and butter? I don't care if the butter isn't good. You are driving this dieting game too hard and far, old girl. Can't you see that I am well now, and that all I need now is food? What about one little trout? Tom, do you think that a morsel of real food would do me any harm now? Honestly, Tom? I ask you as a soldier."

"Answering as a soldier, sir, all I can say is that I'm not the M.O. Jessie is in command of this hospital, sir, and seems to know it. Was that all you wanted of me, Mr. Reward?"

"No, that isn't what I wanted of you at all. Keep that darned toast out of sight! I have an important letter here which I want mailed at Plaster Rock as soon as possible—to-day, if it can be done. If I had known that the Captain meant to go up-stream this morning I would have asked him to put off that trip for a couple of days and take this letter instead. Yes, it is as important as all that. What do you suggest?"

"As the Captain is away, I am at your service, sir. Let me take the letter. It won't go quite as fast as if the Captain had it—but the water is good all the way down. I'll hire someone in the village to help me as far as the mouth of this stream on the return

journey, and from there I'll be able to tow the canoe up."

"You are a brick, Tom!" exclaimed the millionaire. "You deserve all the buttered toast in the world, and most of the little trout. May you never feel the pangs of hunger or have Jessie Sabatis for your nurse and doctor. Here is the letter—and here is some money you may need. Keep a-going, but don't strain your arm. If you see any beefsteak at Plaster Rock, buy a chunk of it and fetch it along. And don't say a word about me to the folks in the village, whatever you do. If the postmaster asks you any questions answer him with stories about how you and the Captain won the war."

So Tom Snicken stowed the important letter away in his breast and set out for the post office, with food and cigarettes and tea enough in the canoe to last him there and back. He paddled very stiffly, but not badly for a wooden-armed performer. By keeping in the channel, where the current ran straight and strong, he managed to knock out a pace of close upon four miles an hour. Tom had never really learned to paddle a canoe, even as a two-handed man, but he was one of those fellows who know enough about everything to be able to make a fairly successful shot at anything. He had learned to do so many things in the war as well as they possibly could be done under the circumstances and with the materials at hand, that now he knew how to paddle a canoe with one real arm and one that was artificial from the elbow to the stiff finger-tips. And yet he had never been called upon to perform in a canoe in France or Flanders—though there had frequently been water enough in his trench, heaven knows! I think he would

never have distinguished himself as a canoe-man in his old two-handed days ; but as a one-handed performer he was first-rate. He was a master of makeshift. He took the low grip on the paddle, just above the shoulder of the blade with his hand of flesh and live bone ; and he managed the upper grip with the crook of his elbow and his chest. So he pried himself along and steered with skill.

He landed above the village, behind a screen of bushes, early in the afternoon. There he shook the wrinkles carefully out of his trousers, fastened his soft collar and tied a glaring regimental tie, donned his coat and lit a cigarette in a long, sky blue tube. Then he set out for the Post Office. He found Dan Whalen's store and posted James Reward's letter.

Dan lamped Mr. Snicken in a second, you may be sure, and leaned over the counter to him with an ingratiating smile.

" I'll hev the outfit all ready for you folks by three-thirty," he said. " There aint another storekeeper in town could hev done it, though I sez it who shouldn't."

" What outfit ? " asked Tom, holding his remarkable cigarette tube in his gloved hand and fitting a fresh smoke into it with the other.

" Ain't you one of the party that come in from Noo York last night ? " asked Whalen, eyeing the gloved hand curiously.

" Not me."

" You ain't ! I reckoned you was, for sure. Somethin' the matter with yer hand, mister ? "

" Yes. It is buried."

"Buried? You don't say! How d'ye mean buried, mister?"

"In Flanders. This one is shop-made. Do you know of a man I can hire to paddle me up river about ten miles? I want to get away by five o'clock. He'll have to walk home—but it's worth a ten dollar bill to him."

"Sure I know a man. Ten mile up river, you say? That would take you pretty nigh the mouth of Fisher Crick. D'ye happen to be goin' up the crick, by any manner of chance?"

"I want to go on past the creek, if you don't mind, old thing. We had better call it fourteen miles—and say a dollar for each mile. How is that? Name your man, quick, for I have some shopping to do."

"Fourteen miles? There's some good pools thereabouts. Did you come down stream to-day? And how long d'ye cal'late to stop on the river?"

"You are asking for something—but I am merciful, as I am strong, and so won't say it. I wouldn't disturb the duck-weed on your pond for the change of a five-pound note after buying up your stock. If you talked better English I'd think you were a spy. I want two bags of flour, ten tins of condensed milk, ten pounds of bacon, a peck of prunes, a man who can paddle a canoe for a fifteen-dollar job and any other little thing you can think of before five o'clock. Are you doing business, oh Archibald, or must I hie me elsewhere?"

"Sure I'm doin' business," returned Whalen, who was puzzled but not displeased, for Tom Snicken's manner was as bland as his smile. "The man you want is

right here somewheres. I'll give him a holler. Hey thar Mal ! Mal Davis, I wancher ! "

A long figure appeared in an open door at the back of the store and approached at a gait between a slouch and a shuffle.

" Mal, you be here at ten to five, sharp, to carry this gent's grub down to his canoe," said Whalen. " Then you gotter run him fourteen mile up river and hoof yer way home. There's good money in it, Mal—so don't forgit it."

" Guess I'll wait right here till ten to five," said the long young man, composing himself on a sack of beans. " The fish ain't bitin' at the dam. Lemme have a plug of chewin', will ye, Mister Whalen ? "

Whalen passed out the tobacco and Mal bit off a corner of it.

" What do you call him Mal for ? " asked Snicken, eyeing the long lad curiously. What sort of a name is that ? Anything to do with mal-de-mer ? "

"It's his name, that's why," said the store-keeper. " Short for the name he was christened by, which was Malachi. Smart man in a canoe, is this here Mal, for all he looks kinder rangy and jointy. He don't belong to these parts exactly, but he's shapin' to make a good citizen. Slow but sure, that's Mal."

" I'm toddling," said Tom starting for the door.

He reached the door, which stood open, simultaneously with a person from outside ; and as that person was a woman, Tom side-stepped with alacrity. Then, as she glanced at him, he recognized her. He grabbed at his hat, then tried to look as if he had been simply straightening it on his head. She regarded him with amused and

enquiring eyes, a fleeting smile and a ghost of a bow, as she passed him. She was followed closely by the gentleman in the white felt hat, and by a sturdily-built, more than middle-aged person in grey flannel trousers and a Norfolk jacket, whom Tom had never seen before.

Tom went outside.

"It's her," he said. "The Captain was right. Good staff work!"

He walked away a dozen paces, turned and walked back again. It was four o'clock—but tea-time was forgotten. He re-entered the store with the air of one who had forgotten something and found Whalen deep in his finest line of talk with the girl and her companions, and Mal Davis dozing on the sack of beans. The storekeeper glanced his way.

"Add ten—ten majiggers—to that order of mine, please," he said.

"Sure," returned Whalen. "Ten—what was it you said!"

"Pots of strawberry jam," said Tom.

Whalen nodded and wrote on a pad which he held in one fat palm. The stout man, who had glanced up for a moment, continued to say things, and Whalen went on talking and writing. John de la Reward stood listening. The girl turned one of her shoulders to the group and shot a corner-eyed glance at Tom. It hit. Tom felt it though he did not see it.

Tom stood gazing into a show-case at dozens of buttons of all sorts and sizes sewn on to blue cards, his tea-time utterly forgotten. "Here she is," he reflected; "and now what the devil will the Captain do next?" This thing looked serious to him, for he knew the Captain.

He wondered who the big fellow was with the round, sun-tanned face and the general look of authority, will-power and ready money. He counted a card of little white buttons and made twenty-four of them ; and then he allowed himself a brief side-glance. He started slightly, for she was within a yard of him, her eyes on the absorbing show-case.

" Don't look startled, please," she said. " But speak to me, like a good-natured stranger, and tell me something about the kind of flies to use on these rivers."

Tom Snicken blinked his eyes quickly, pinched himself and found that he did not sleep and dream. He lifted his hat slightly.

" Fishing," he said, " Certainly. These rivers are full of fishing—of fish, I mean. Speckled beauties, as the guide-books say."

She looked at him gravely and kindly, and he looked back as long as he dared and then returned his gaze to the buttons.

" You say millers are right on these waters," she said in a clear voice. " I thought so." In a lower voice she continued, " Mr. MacLean has his eye on me. He is mildly interested in what I am saying. You are a friend of Captain Robert Sayle, aren't you ? "

" Yes, Miss—and his servant. We were together in France."

" Oh, his soldier-servant. I knew you were a soldier—by your eyes as much as by your hand. I knew it that day you accompanied my father and me out to Earl's Court. Now say something about fishing good and loud and then tell me where your friend is—Captain Sayle."

" The little trout are better eating than the big fellows. The ones that run about eight to a breakfast are the best. They are my favourites. He is up Fisher Creek and in good health."

" Why did you come to Fisher Creek ? "

" He called at your house and you were away. He lunched with your father, and expected to be invited around again. But he wasn't. When he called again you were all gone without leaving any address with the servants. He was down very low until he remembered something the old—your father—had said about looking up somebody at a place called Fisher Creek, in this country. So we came by way of New York. Here comes the big cove. Yes, some of them run to three pounds, I give you my word. The silver doctor is a first-rate fly for the big chaps."

Mr. Ian MacLean, the mighty hunter, stood beside them.

" This gentleman recommends millers and the silver doctor for these waters, and says there are plenty of fish everywhere," said June.

The big elderly man and the small young man bowed to each other.

" Have you fished a stream called Fisher Creek ? " asked MacLean.

" Yes, and have found it good, and the farther up you go the more numerous, lively and weighty are the trout," replied Tom.

" Are you alone ? Alone on the river, I mean."

" Not exactly. That is, more or less. One might say sometimes."

Mr. MacLean looked sharply into the innocent, smiling face.

"Quite so, quite so," he said. "We are buying provisions. Must get away to-night. Are you going in or coming out?"

"I am coming in," replied Tom pleasantly.

"Coming in? Ah, I see. Well, good luck. I must step along."

"Watch your step," said Tom, with a little bow and his happiest smile.

Mr. MacLean wheeled and stared. Tom bowed again and smiled again. The mighty hunter grunted and returned to Dan Whalen and the author of *God and the Butterflies*. June winked at Tom and followed the mighty hunter. Tom raised his hat with a flourish and left the store for the second time. He hurried to the hotel and demanded tea. They informed him with a knowing air, that supper wasn't ready. He argued until they supplied him with a brown pot of tea that tasted as if it had been left over from the last Church social and a plate of buttered toast. Tom's fighting blood was up, so he drained the tea-pot. He had tasted tea almost as bad in the fire-trench.

"That stout noggins is tobogganing for a bump," he said. "I don't like him. Does he think he made the world?—or who does he think he is? The chances of something sudden and violent happening to him before he gets back to his dug-out are about ninety-nine to one. Buttinsky, as they say in the A.E.F. Thinks he looks good to her, does he? The sooner he is informed of the fact that he is in the wrong trenches, the better for all concerned. She is the Captain's girl—and if

she wasn't she'd be mine, if I had to renounce my class and become an earl to win her—by the gods of war! Perhaps he thinks he is worth money. Money! How would he look if he lost five millions and nine hundred and ninety-nine thousands, like the Captain? He'd look like minus six millions. But it didn't bother us. We are still going. We didn't bat an eye."

He went back to Whalen's store and found the things he had ordered all ready in sacks and boxes, and Malachi Davis waiting on the sack of beans. He paid the bill. Whalen told him that Mr. MacLean's party—the three sports, one guide and two canoes—were to start up river in half-an-hour. He said he wasn't interested in Mr. MacLean. Then he looked at the long youth who was to take him part way home.

"Malachi, old soldier, unfasten yourself from the fire-step and stand to," he said. "It's the truth—but if you're ashamed of it I promise not to say anything more about it. We'll all be ashamed to admit it five years from now, except in whispers behind closed doors."

They loaded the canoe and embarked. Tom sat forward at his ease, with his back to the bow, and smoked cigarettes. Mal stood up aft and plied a long pole.

"Don't the people here know that you are an old soldier?" asked Tom.

"No, they don't—because I ain't," replied Malachi.

"You'll hurt your jaw talking like that old son."

"Like what, mister?"

"Ain't and the rest of it. But don't mister me, Malachi. I'm not even a Sergeant-Major, and never was."

The long youth poled onward in silence for several minutes, gazing straight ahead of him over the shining water. At last he lowered his eyes and looked steadily at his employer.

"Why do you think I am an old soldier?" he asked.

"First of all, because I know you are not the mossy bushwhacker you pretend to be; second, because you carry your watch in your pocket but take a look at your wrist for the time; third, because I saw two or three shrapnel wounds on your shoulders by peeping down the back of your collar; and fourth, because I remember seeing you somewhere at the war."

"You don't remember where?"

"No, nor when."

"Perhaps you are right. If you are, you are the only person in this part of the world who is. Do you mind forgetting it, overlooking it? You will oblige me greatly by doing so. I give you my word that I haven't let the service down, or done anything like that—but I have troubles of my own."

"Trust me," returned Tom. I'll keep my suspicions to myself. You needn't worry about me—unless you are contemplating some sort of dirty work at the cross-roads."

"I'm not, 'pon honour. I am harmless. Thanks very much, old top."

"Don't mention it. I am sorry you have troubles. By the way, the lady you saw in Whalen's shop to-day doesn't happen to be your trouble, or the cause of it, does she?—because if she is or does, look out for me."

"No, I assure you. I never saw her before. No

such luck. You—she is—you are—ah, what about yourself ? "

" Yes, and no and not exactly so, Malachi."

At eight o'clock they went ashore and made a fire and had supper. By this time they were very good friends. Tom did the cooking. At ten they reached the mouth of Fisher Creek.

" In here," said Tom. " I told Whalen fourteen miles, because that is what I want him to believe. Will you take me all the way ?—eight miles up ? I'm not much of a hand against swift water."

" Right you are," agreed Malachi.

CHAPTER XII

MISSING

TOM and his new friend reached Pod Reward's place shortly after one o'clock in the morning. Malachi retired to the tent and one of Bob Sayle's blankets, and fell asleep immediately ; and Tom went up to the shack and reported to James Reward. He found James sitting up cool and strong and hungry, smoking a cigar and reading a paper-covered edition of *The Moonstone*. Tom did not mention the people he had seen in Dan Whalen's store, for he did not know how the information of their intended visit to the Creek might be received. Whether or not Mr. Reward expected them or knew that Mr. John de la Reward was looking for a cousin in the woods, he did not know ; but he felt sure that the Captain would be glad to have them on Fisher Creek. Things were working just as the Captain had planned. Good ! Let them work !

" Did you bring in some fresh meat ? " asked Reward.

Tom started guiltily, remembering fresh meat then for the first time since early morning.

" It doesn't matter," continued Reward. " The Captain will soon be here with some, I suppose. He has been long enough away."

"Hasn't he been home since morning, sir?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Not to my knowledge. Do you think he has met with an accident? But that's not likely. He handles a canoe well. He went up stream, so you told me this morning. I wish he had gone some other way."

"Why, sir? Is there anything particularly wrong with that direction?"

"There may be. There are a couple of queer characters in these woods—unless they have gone clean out of the country. If they haven't skipped the country, then the chances are they are up on the headwaters of this creek. If I was stronger I'd go up and look around—for when I say queer characters I mean dangerous characters."

"I'll start up stream first thing in the morning."

"You! with only one arm, lad! No, we must think of something better than that."

Tom did not argue the point. He went to the tent and looked in at the long youth, who slept quietly. Then he carried up most of the new provisions from the canoe. He approached the shack several times; and finally, upon seeing that both the patient and the nurse were asleep, he entered on tip-toe and possessed himself of Noel's duck-gun. It was a good gun—but where were the cartridges for it? He hunted everywhere, but in vain. He found nothing in the way of ammunition except a few dozen rounds of rifle ammunition—and the rifle had already gone up stream with the captain. He replaced the gun noiselessly in its corner and went back to the tent. He would go, anyway, even without a weapon—and alone, if necessary. He lay

down on his blankets and smoked ; and every now and again he examined the face of his watch by the tiny lamp of his cigarette.

At half-past four, Tom went outside and built up the fire, put water on to boil for tea and placed the bean-crock in the edge of the fire to heat. Then he aroused the long youth Malachi. While they breakfasted, Tom told a good deal about himself and Captain Sayles, and something of the Captain's romantic reason for coming to Fisher Creek, and of the Captain's trip up stream and failure to return.

" I'm going after him," he said. " If I can't get someone with two arms to go with me, then I have to go alone with only one arm."

" Perhaps you will have room in your canoe for me," said Malachi.

" Do you mean it ? "

" I do. I am with you on this relief expedition. What will your friend up at the shack have to say about it when he learns that you have hopped it ? "

" To hell with what he has to say ! He seems a good sort—but I'm going up for the Captain if every mile of the way causes the death of a gentleman like James Reward. The Captain was my platoon commander, and for a while he was my company commander, and then for more than a year before we left the battalion I was his servant—and he is a man in a million. You were never an officer's servant, Malachi, so you don't fully understand how I feel. You have served in the ranks, though—but you took a cadet course and got your commission."

"Babble away to your heart's content, Tom—unless you happen to be in a hurry to rescue your friend."

They rolled food and frying-pan and kettle in their blankets, and the blankets in a rubber ground sheet, and stowed all aboard the canoe, in ten minutes. Malachi Davis took the stern of the canoe. He paddled until they were out of sight of the shack and then he stood up and got the long pole to work. With every thrust he jumped the light craft clear of the water for half her length.

While the relief expedition surged up the stream, Bob Sayle awoke in a cave and remembered what had happened to him with a sinking sensation at the pit of his stomach. His hands and feet were still bound. He sat up and looked about him by the dim light; and the fight and capture, the journey as a prisoner, and the walk from the canoe to the cave, returned vividly to his mind. They had freed his feet for the walk in, to save themselves the fag of carrying him, but had tied them securely again the moment they had introduced him to his present quarters. Then they had asked him questions which he had been far too indignant to answer. They had fed him before sunset, and made him a bed of moss, and given him a blanket; and he had slept soundly ever since. The cave was in a dry, rocky hillside. He had not been bothered by flies or mosquitoes during his sleep.

He found himself alone in the cave. He rolled over and knelt up, and commenced to hop laboriously on his knees towards the patch of growing light thirty feet away. He had made only three hops when the light ahead was suddenly obscured. He immediately sank

to earth, straightened out his knees and lay on his back.

Noel Sabatis entered the cave, stooped double and armed with an axe. He advanced very slowly, giving his eyes time to adjust themselves to the gloom; for he was standing in his own light.

"You there?" he asked.

"Of course I'm here," replied Bob; "and unless you cut these cords clear and give me my canoe and kit, I am likely to be here until my friends come for me—until this afternoon."

"Friends don't know. You got money, hey?—one two hundred dollar?"

"Yes; but it isn't for you two old pirates, as I have already told your companion in crime."

"Pod go shootin' for deer," whispered Noel, squatting beside the prisoner and peering closely into his face. "Pod one damn bad old man. He go shootin' way back on the black woods now. Bad man, Pod Reward."

"Pod Reward? So that's who he is! Jim's father, I suppose. Well, I don't like him—and the only people I give money to are people I like. As for you, you miserable old fool, you'll never see a dollar of mine even if you keep me here till hell freezes over."

And then Bob's knees came up quick as lightning, both together, with all the strength of his back and hips behind them, and one of them caught Noel Sabatis on the point of the chin.

Noel grunted, toppled backward and lay motionless.

Bob hitched himself over to the axe which Noel had let fall, turned it blade upward with his bound hands, held it in position with his knees and sawed the bonds on his wrists back and forth over the keen edge. With

his hands free, he soon cut through the lashings at his ankles. He glanced at Noel Sabatis and saw that he had not moved. He did not look closer, for fear that the old fellow was dead. Axe in hand he went to the mouth of the cave and peered cautiously out, first surveying the sloping hillside straight in front, then looking to the left and then to the right.

What Bob saw on his right caused him to duck quick as a wink. He lay very close to the moss and wriggled backward a foot or so, wishing fervently that he had looked to the right before to the front and left; for there sat old Pod Reward about ten yards away, with his back against a grey rock, the rifle across his lap and his face towards the entrance to the cave.

Bob lay motionless for a minute, wondering if the watcher had spotted him, As nothing happened in the minute to enlighten him on this head, he shifted cautiously forward again and obtruded a furtive profile beyond the flank of rock. Again he saw Pod. The old fellow had not moved since his first sight of him. His eyes were shut. He was asleep. Bob wriggled forward until he was clear of the cave by half his length; and still the old pirate with the rifle did not lift a lid. Bob lay low then for a little while and studied the natural features of the ground, looking for cover between himself and the sleeper. What he wanted was cover from fire as well as from view—a first-rate defensive position. Nothing of the kind was to be seen; so he decided to chance a frontal attack. He crawled on his belly, pushing the axe along in his right hand. He crawled one yard, two yards, three yards, without a sound, staring all the while at his unconscious objective.

The new, clear daylight swam level and bright over the scene, and every thin blade of wild grass in Bob's path glistened with dew. Four yards !—five yards !—he was half-way there. Two jumps would put him in possession of the rifle. He drew his legs up under him and began to raise his weight on his feet. He released the axe from his fingers and lifted his dew-wet hands from the ground.

At that moment the sleeper against the rock opened his eyes. Bob jumped ; and something hit him on the back of his head. His legs wilted as he touched the ground and he sprawled forward on the top of old Pod Reward, limp and harmless.

Pod cursed peevishly as he extracted himself and his rifle from beneath the unconscious Bob. His nerves were all on the twang. He cussed Noel Sabatis, who stood unsteadily before him with a big stone in his right hand and a groggy look in his eyes. Noel did not answer back. He let the stone with which he had bashed Bob fall to the ground, sat down beside it and nursed his head in his hands.

" Ye're a dumb-plagued fool ! " cried Pod Reward. " How come ye to let him out, anyhow ?—an' then ye go an' hurt his head ! D'ye want the police up here a-lookin' for a dead man ? Didn't I tell ye to talk polite to him ?—an' here he was almost a-top of me before I know'd it ! What the hell did ye untie his hands an' his feet for, ye pore fool ? "

Noel felt too sick to even attempt a reply. His brain was floating and his stomach churning. He had made a mighty effort of will to drive his body into action for the undoing of the dangerous prisoner, and now he

suffered the reaction. He swayed where he sat. He was conscious of only one thing beside his physical discomfort, and that was the fact that he had hated Pod Reward for years and years. Yes, and now he hated him even more than he feared him.

Thanks to Noel's groggy condition, the back of Bob Sayle's skull was still intact. The stone with which the old Maliseet had done his knocking was flat and smooth of surface, fortunately. Bob recovered consciousness within a few minutes of receiving the blow, and opened his eyes for the second time that morning on the interior of the cave. His feet were bound together, his head was bandaged in a sleeve of his own shirt and Pod Reward stood stooped over him.

"How d'ye feel now?" asked Pod, with an offensive grin.

"Better than you will feel when I am done with you," replied Bob.

"Thar ain't no call to feel ugly about it," said Pod, "Live an' let be, that's my motter. If folks leave me be, I leave 'em be. Ye hadn't no call to come up here spyin' after us."

"I have told you that I am neither a constable nor a game-warden," retorted Bob. "When I first saw you I knew nothing against you—nothing worse than I saw in your face—and that is enough to hang you. But now I know who you are, old bean, and why you are hiding up here. You are James Reward's father—and I am his friend. You are the man who shot him. Don't deny it."

To Bob's horror, the old fellow grinned.

"Did ye say he was dead?" he asked.

Then Bob realised that this one of his jailers at least was mad, insane. His heart failed him for the firsttime since his capture—but it was not the sort of heart to remain in that state for long. He fortified his courage with expressions of just indignation; and old Pod continued to grin.

"Now ye're getting real sassy," said Pod. "Yer all wild-cat an' ginger, same as me when I was young. An' smart, too—same as me. Shet yer jaw now an' set quiet a spell an' I'll fetch ye some breakfast. But I'd best tie yer hands before I leave ye."

"You had better not, if you set any value on your miserable life," warned Bob. Keep your distance. I don't like you. I mean it."

The old man backed away from him.

"Ye wouldn't lamn me on the jaw with yer knees the way ye done that fool Injun, would ye?" he asked apprehensively. "Ain't it for yer own good I got ye here, so's Noel Sabatis won't shoot ye? That's a bad Injun, Noel Sabatis, an' would knife a man quick as he'd rob 'im an' rob 'im quick as he'd give 'im good-day. Ye done jist what I was wantin' to do myself when ye busted 'im in the jaw. Sure, ye done that. An' what d'ye want to harm me for—pore old Pod Reward driv from his home an' hidin' in the wilderness like a fox from them that's persecutin' and prosecutin' him. Look-a-here, did ye say he was dead?"

Discretion got the better of Bob's anger and disgust and he suddenly saw that the correct thing to do under the circumstances was to play a game of low cunning. He had read somewhere of crafty people's humouring mad people and extricating themselves from extremely

awkward positions by doing so—and that this old rip was mad there could be no doubt.

"You are right," he said. "I didn't see it that way before. It's none of my business, anyhow, so long as you give me something to eat and keep Noel Sabatis from doing me in. Fetch along a whole kettle of tea, will you—and don't let Noel get in here at me."

Pod seemed pleased.

"But I gotter tie yer hands, jist in case ye git ugly agin," he said. "Or ye might git to rampagin' round an' Noel would shoot ye."

Bob submitted to the tying; and the old man made a good job of it.

CHAPTER XIII

"Every man who has puddled about in the world has friendships to which he dare not apply the test of the golden touch. He values those friendships for more or less—for the amount of pleasure they give him—and shrinks from the thought of their committing suicide for so ignoble a reason as five or fifteen pounds sterling. I know of a friendship between two men who had faced death together a dozen times that was broken by an attempt to register a ten pound touch. The truth is, the Major hadn't the money—but the skipper couldn't see it in that light. Ask your friend to give you his last drink and carry you in on his back under machine-gun fire—but don't ask him for a bunch of Treasury Notes unless his private income is five times as much as the pay and allowances of his rank and appointment."—From *King's Irregulations and Disorders*.

BOB SAYLE down in the cool cave waited for his promised breakfast. He lay on his side, for the back of his head was sore as a boil, and kept an eye on the bright mouth of the cave. He was thirsty and hungry and still a trifle dizzy, but his spirits were up. His spirits were naturally buoyant and he had enjoyed his morning's adventures. His recent talk with Pod Reward, and his decision to the effect that the old man was absolutely balmy, utterly demented, had caused him to view the difficulties of his position from a more hopeful angle than the slant of the night before. His first bewilderment and anger had cooled and faded away; and now he saw the whole misadventure as a game, and felt that he knew enough about the game to play it through and get away with the pot.

The only thing that worried him was anxiety for Tom Snicken. He knew that Tom was already looking for him, and he feared that the downright little sportsman would look in the right place and get himself hurt. The trouble with Tom was that he would not understand that the loss of an arm is an obstacle to the more strenuous forms of physical activity and that he wasn't fit to fight with his own weight in high explosive any old morning before breakfast.

Bob waited patiently for fifteen or twenty minutes, dozing with one eye half open, and still his breakfast did not come. He moved on his hands and knees to the mouth of the cave and looked cautiously out. No one was in sight, and no smoke went up anywhere within his field of vision to indicate a fire. The sun was high by this time, shining in a flawless summer sky, and a little wind fanned the air. Bob seated himself openly in the entrance to the cave and continued to wait hopefully. He did not intend to crawl out and start a fight again, and so upset his plan of humouring the mad man, unless he had to. But he was very dry and thought of the promised kettle of tea with longing.

From where he sat he could see the valley of the stream about half-a-mile away to his front; but no flash or gleam of the stream itself. A low, pulsing murmur came to him across the rocky hummocks and thin groves, rolling with uneven voice up from the dark cleft at the foot of the timbered horizon.

At last Pod Reward appeared from among the brush of alders and birches on the left, rifle in hand. He came straight to Bob at a shuffling run and asked him if he had seen Noel Sabatis. Bob replied that he had not

seen either the Maliseet or the breakfast that had been promised him. This remark seemed to impress the old man strongly.

"Ain't ye et since sundown yesterday?" he exclaimed. "It's all the fault of that peeky Injun. He put it clean out of my head."

He turned and hurried away and was soon lost to Bob's sight in the brush from which he had so suddenly appeared. He returned in about ten minutes, fully laden. In one hand he carried a tin plate whereon lay two cold and stodgy looking flap-jacks and several cold rashers of bacon, in the other he held a smoke-blackened kettle and a tin mug, and under one arm he continued to grip his rifle. He deposited these things beside Bob and seated himself on the dry moss.

"I can't feed myself with my wrists tied together," said Bob.

Pod smiled craftily.

"I'll feed ye," he said.

A rusty two-tined fork lay on the plate with the flap-jacks and bacon. The old man picked this up and was about to spear a rasher of bacon when immobility suddenly descended upon him. For several seconds he remained as motionless as a stone, his head turned slightly in an attitude of listening, his right hand extended and the fork poised over the cold food. The fork slipped from his fingers; and in the same instant he jumped to his feet, snatched up the rifle, nipped it to his shoulder and fired at a point in the edge of the sunlit silent brush. A twig fell, and the echoes of the report ran among the rocky hummocks. Then he dashed forward and vanished among

the alders and young birches with a fine swishing of branches.

"The devil take him!" exclaimed Bob. "That wouldn't be Tom he let fly at, thank heaven, for it is too early. The chances are that it wasn't anything. He is stark, raving mad—too mad for practical purposes, I fear."

Then Bob breakfasted. He held the fork in both hands and stuck it into the food, only to find that he could not reverse the fork and so bring the food to his mouth. He shifted his hold on the fork and used it as an axe, chopping the leathery flap-jacks and cheerless strips of bacon so vigorously and persistently that they were soon reduced to fragments. It looked an unattractive mess. It reminded him of the fact that he was more thirsty than hungry; so he turned from it and tackled the tea-kettle with both hands. By the time the mug was full, the moss for a yard around was generously splashed with cold tea. Try pouring tea with your wrists bound tight together. Then he crouched like a cat to the mug, where it sat brim-full on the ground, and drank up the bitter brown liquid. He was about to move against the flap-jack and bacon with renewed determination when the rifle cracked again this time hundreds of yards away to his right and front. The thought occurred to him that a person in Pod Reward's state of mental and moral disarray might not be very particular in the choice of a target when once the shooting fever was upon him. He forgot his breakfast and moved back into the mouth of the cave.

Again the rifle spoke. The report of the exploding cordite was followed by a familiar and unpleasant

sound—the long, singing, ragged whine of a ricochetting bullet.

"He missed whatever he is shooting at," said Bob. Perhaps he'll remember me and up and cut loose at a fixed target, if he misses it—whatever it is—a few more times. That is what I would do if I were a madman with a rifle and a grudge.

He examined the many turns of cord at his wrists with a thought of getting busy at the knots with his teeth, only to find that the crafty Pod had tied a knot at every turn, and that even the least unapproachable of them all lay just below the pinch of his eye-teeth, no matter how he bent his arms and twisted his neck. He looked on at the kettle, the tin plate, the mug and the fork. The cover of the kettle might have an inner edge sharp enough for his purpose. He crawled out, pulled it from the kettle with his teeth, got it into position on the ground and commenced sawing at it with his wrists. He worked hard. One of the turns of cord was slightly frayed and his hands were sticky with blood, when he was interrupted by a breathless and terrified yell.

He turned his head toward the sound, without rising or changing his position in any way, and beheld old Noel Sabatis in full flight across the open ground. For an instant he saw the ashen mask of the Maliseet's face turned toward him as if in warning—and then Noel was gone, vanished into the unheeding wilderness of alders and slim young birches as if he had never been.

Bob lay flat, as tight to the moss as the moss to a stony soil, and looked past his shoulder at the way Noel had come. He saw a commotion in the bushes, and then

Pod Reward. The old man was running doggedly, holding the rifle in both hands across his body. His hat was gone and his mouth was open. He stumbled and almost fell to his knees two or three times, but he did not look once to the right or left. He crossed the open and was engulfed by the bushes within a few yards of the spot where the Maliseet had disappeared.

Bob expanded his lungs again and detached himself slightly from the bosom of Mother Earth and fell to work again at the cover of the tea-kettle. One turn of the cord was scraped through at last ; but the damage to the hands was beginning to look serious. A bright idea came to him. He pushed the cover on to a surface of flat rock, right side up, and jumped on it blindly and heavily half-a-dozen times. He examined the battered thing, found that it had split in several places and that in one place a jagged edge protruded beyond the rim. This was exactly what he had hoped for. He worried at it with his knees and his bound and torn hands until he got it wedged into the desired position between his knees. Then he pecked and sawed patiently until the last turn of the cord was cut through. He quickly freed his feet and then fell to sucking the frayed edges of his hands. He was thus engaged when a faint shout caused him to look up.

He saw Pod Reward standing facing him about thirty yards away on the lower slope of the hill—but he knew that it was not Pod who had shouted. The sound had come from far away toward the valley of the stream. He reasoned thus even as he flung himself to the right and fell flat behind a low, fern-fringed boulder. As he hit the moss, a bullet went over, high over, and spatted

on a rock in the face of the upper slope. He was glad to know that Pod was shooting wild.

Again the shout came in from the distant stream; and this time it was answered by a shout from a dense knoll of spruces not one hundred and fifty yards away. Bob peered around the edge of his cover in time to see old Pod wheel and let loose a shot at the cone of the spruces. The fellow was not only crazy, but he had lost his sense of woodcraft and low cunning. Bob grinned and felt about until he got hold of a manageable lump of stone with each hand, just in case the mad man took it into his head to charge his position. But Pod did not charge. A third shout from the direction of the hidden stream caused him to turn and hurry toward it.

Bob instantly slipped from the shelter of the boulder and followed the old man, still holding the stones in his hands. He ran, stooping almost double, but not otherwise making any effort at concealment. He felt sure that the man who shouted from the valley was Tom Snicken; and he felt equally sure that it was Pod Reward's intention to make a short and conclusive job of the shouter. He ran noiselessly over the rough but mossy ground and soon had Pod in sight among the scattered bushes; but the growth became thicker and taller as he neared the bottom of the hill. He lost sight of the old man in a wood of young firs and spruces. He went forward more slowly from that point and paused often to listen. As he could not hear anything of the movements of the man in front, his pace became slower and slower and he parted the underbrush with a cautious hand and set his foot down as if upon egg-shells, expect-

ing every moment to be confronted by the muzzle of the rifle.

At last Bob ceased to move forward at all; and then he became aware of the approach of someone or something behind him. He lay down and looked both ways. He was soon rewarded by a view of Noel's legs. The Maliseet passed within a few yards of him, axe in hand. Bob let him go, for he was not sure of him. That Noel was now at war with Pod Reward there could be no doubt —but that he had been very much at war with Bob a few hours ago was equally certain. This was evidently a game of every man for himself, reflected Bob; and if old Reward happened to be lying in ambush, Noel might prove to be very useful by drawing his fire.

Again the shout came from the direction of the stream. It was Tom Snicken's voice, and it came from less than a hundred yards away. It was answered by the crack of Pod's rifle just ahead, then a crashing and swishing of underbrush and grunts and curses. Bob dashed to the point of disturbance and found the two old men rolling together in a mossy hollow. Noel had dropped his axe, but Pod continued to cling to the rifle. They both clung to the rifle—each a hand on the rifle and a hand on the other's throat. Bob stood over the fight, broke Pod's hold, then yanked the weapon from Noel. He snatched up the discarded axe with his left hand and dashed away at top speed, shouting the name of Tom Snicken.

Bob and the relief expedition of two soon joined, and Bob briefly outlined his misadventures as they made their way to the canoe. Tom and Malachi had come ashore at the tail of the pool below the fall which Bob had heard from the cave—the end of navigable water on Fisher

Creek. They had seen nothing of the other canoes. The three were about to embark, when Noel Sabatis came sliding down the bank to them. He was puffing hard and his dusky face was bleeding.

"Lemme go too," he cried. "Pod's gone madder'n hell. Lemme come, or Pod kill me. Show you canoe."

"We'll take him," said Bob. "What he says about the other old gink is right—and we may as well collect my canoe. Where is it?" he asked, turning to Noel.

"You come an' fetch rifle," said Noel.

"Me too," said Tom. "You wait here, Malachi, with one eye on this canoe and t'other on the landscape, and the axe held lightly but firmly between the thumb and forefinger of both hands."

Bob and Tom followed the Maliseet a few yards along the edge of the pool and then up the steep bank.

"Hide 'um here," said Noel.

They looked down into a narrow pocket in the bank just in time to see something vanish over the edge of it. There lay Bob's canoe, her back broken beyond repair by a fifty-pound rock.

"Pod git here first," said Noel.

As they went back to the canoe at the foot of the pool, Tom said casually, "I saw the gentleman in the white hat and his daughter at Plaster Rock, sir. They were headed this way—and may be at the shack by this time. She recognized me, sir, and asked after you."

CHAPTER XIV

MR. MACLEAN was nominally the leader of the party that Tom met at Plaster Rock, because Mr. John de la Reward was of a modest disposition. But the man in the white hat was the real boss. The guide was a very good riverman named Amos Dingle, fifty years of age, who had gone to the war with his three sons and returned with only one of them.

June did her best to get the party away from Plaster Rock that evening, but failed owing to the fact that the guide had gone to see a brother of his and would not be ready to embark on the up-river trip until six o'clock in the morning. So June went to bed soon after supper. John and Ian sat up till ten, smoking and fighting flies on the verandah of the hotel. They were not disturbed, for the people of the village thought them just ordinary "sports." Even Dan Whalen did not suspect the man in the white hat, from New York, of being connected in any way with the loony old Englishman of the disjointed name who was looking for a cousin. John had decided, while in New York, to look his cousin over before disclosing the relationship, and so had kept the name of Reward completely out of sight in the matter of the expedition.

Ian MacLean, the mighty hunter, had attached him-

self to the Fisher Creek expedition for reasons of his own, which will doubtless disclose themselves in the course of the narrative.

The mighty hunter and the author of *God and the Butterflies* sat on the verandah side by side in wooden rocking-chairs, smoking and smacking flies. For a long time they sat in silence, each following his own thoughts. John's thoughts went deep into his heart and mind and then far and wide over the world. Ian's thoughts did not go so deep as his friend's, nor yet so far.

"June is very good-natured," said Ian.

"Very," said John, from far afield.

"Almost too good-natured," said Ian.

"Almost," agreed John.

"Are you listening to me?" asked the other, turning sharply.

"I am sorry," replied John. "I'm afraid I didn't hear you. I was wool-gathering. What did you say?"

"I said that June is too good-natured, too friendly with strangers. That is what I was working up to. Effect of the war, I suppose. I don't like it."

"You don't like the effect of the war?"

"I don't like young ladies to be affected by the war in that way. You know what I mean, John. You saw her talking to that young fellow in the store to-day—some Tom, Dick or Harry. He had a smirk on his face. Struck me as a very inferior sort of person. Your daughter is no longer a child."

"You are very observant, Mac. I think you should warn her against talking to soldiers she has not been properly introduced to."

"Why do you think that fellow was a soldier?"

" I knew it at a glance—and least of all by his artificial hand and fore-arm. But you must not be too hard on June, for she means well. She is naturally friendly, like a pup. You should tell her that she is no longer a pup. She would not get on your nerves as she does if you knew her as well as I do, my dear fellow."

Mr. MacLean leaned sideways from his chair and stared at his friend.

" You must be crazy ! " he exclaimed.

" Very likely," returned John, pleasantly. " There are so many ways of being crazy, and so many reasons for going crazy, that I fear you are right. But we were talking about my adopted daughter. Let us consider her as a reason for going crazy—or for making a fool of oneself about, at least. Dozens of men have done it, old and young, and she doesn't see it. She is as natural as a little girl of ten—so don't spoil her. She is the friend of all the world."

" John, you are impractical, and I do believe you are as ignorant of life as the store-keeper, Whalen. How a man who has knocked about as you have can know so little of the ways of the world is a mystery to me. Your wits are always wool-gathering. You are far too impractical to have the sole charge and responsibility of a young lady like June."

" Oh, my hat ! " exclaimed the other. Then he added, very gently, " Mac, my dear old friend, 'ware holes. Also 'ware a brick wall about ten feet high, against which you are in danger of crashing. In other words, go slow ! Do you understand me, Mac ? Change direction ! "

" I don't understand you, John."

"So? I am sorry. Now listen to me. You are Ian MacLean, a man of means, a bachelor, and sixty years of age. For forty-nine years you have been the master of your own life and fortune. Your health has always been good. In forty-nine years you have shot a dozen elephants, more or less, a few lions and tigers and bears, and one musk-ox; added a few thousands of dollars to your hundreds of thousands by accident; and what else? In the same very considerable period of time you have not married, you have not fathered any child of your own or another's, you have not risked your life in any useful or patriotic adventure. My poor Mac, I hate to say it, but you are and have always been a coward and a cumberer of the earth. If you have been practical, then I thank God that I have not been so. I have failed to kill an elephant, but I have killed—but let that go. I bred two men who have fought in Flanders. I was there myself, to see at first hand the workings of a certain hand-grenade in actual warfare—an invention of my own. In short, Mac, I feel myself quite as able to look after my adopted daughter now as I have always been, and as I have proved myself able to bring up my other daughters; and if I didn't I assure you that I shouldn't look to you for help—to a man who has not done anything in sixty years more useful or difficult or dangerous—or practical—than kill a few elephants."

"Really, John—if I thought you were serious—if I thought this your real opinion of my character—I would—it would be very awkward."

"Then don't think it, Mac. I'm off to bed."

"You showed a touch of temper that I didn't suspect you of."

" Good-night and pleasant dreams."

The two canoes made an early start for Fisher Creek, with John and June in one and Amos Dingle and Mr. MacLean in the other. John de la Reward was an expert canoe-man. He stood up to the pole, even in the swiftest water, with as much ease and endurance as did the guide in the other canoe. The mouth of Fisher Creek was reached shortly after noon, and there the canoes were run ashore and a fire was lighted to boil the kettle for lunch. John questioned Amos about Fisher Creek, and the country it watered. The guide was not very familiar with the subject. It was ten years or more since he had last been up the creek, for it was not even a second-class salmon-stream. It had plenty of good pools, but, for reasons unknown to Amos, very few fish. Lumbermen had taken what forest fires had left of its big timber years ago. The country about its upper waters was, for the most part, barren and bog and swamp and rocky knoll, a likely ground for caribou. The land was not of the quality to attract settlers.

" There ain't what you'd call a farm on the whole length of the stream," said Amos Dingle. There's a few Injuns up there, or 'ust to be, trappin' fur and fishin', and there was a white man doin' the same as the Injuns and breakin' the game laws besides."

" I thought there was an old settlement on the creek," said John.

" Only a few Injuns and the white man I told you of. He was born on the crick, I've heard ; and if you don't want to lose your tents and canoes, let's hope he is dead by this time. I've heard folks say as that Pod Reward

wasn't above robbin' an Injun even. There's Injun blood in him."

"Ah!" exclaimed John. "Indian blood, you say—and also some of the best blood out of England."

"So I've been told, sir. Well, the mixture has made the worst white man that was ever seen in these parts, so I've heard tell. In his day he was the smartest chopper and stream-driver, and the most dangerous character, in these here woods. But your name, sir? I heard it, but I didn't eggzackly catch it all. Sounded kinder furrin' to me—but now that I think it over I sort of recollect a kinder familiar sound to it."

"De la Reward," said the other, slowly and distinctly.

"Sufferin' cats:" exclaimed Amos. "Reward! Have you come to see him?"

John nodded, smiling.

"Yes—but keep it under your hat," he said. "It promises to be even more interesting than I hoped. The descent of man, with a vengeance."

They re-embarked. There is a great deal of deep water on the lower half of Fisher Creek; and in several places the current lies almost dead for several miles. In these stretches of still water and muddy shore the men in the sterns of the canoes laid aside their poles and took to the paddles.

They reached Pod's clearing in mid-afternoon. June was the first ashore, but John passed her before she gained the top of the bushy bank. John glanced into the empty tent, then hurried toward the shack. He saw a big man sitting in the door of the shack, smoking a cigar—a clean middle-aged, civilized-appearing person.

Beyond the big man he saw a very old, dusky, thin woman looking out at him with extraordinary bright black eyes.

"Good day," said the man in the door. "What can I do for you?"

"I am looking for a man of the name of Reward," replied John, with his usual disarming smile. "Perhaps you can tell me where he lives?"

"Perhaps," said the other. "Sit down, won't you—on the chopping block there? You must excuse me for not getting up, but I have been ill. Jessie, my cigar-case is in the bunk. Please offer the gentleman a cigar."

The old woman did as she was requested, and the visitor accepted a cigar, lit it, and sat down on the chopping block; and James eyed John keenly all the while.

"Are you looking for any one Reward in particular?" asked James.

"I should be glad to see any Reward, but I came here in the hope of finding Poddington," replied John.

The big man looked relieved.

"I know you now," he said. "You are the member of the tra-la-la root and branch of the family in England who addressed a letter to me in New York. Am I right?"

"I think so. I am John de la Reward."

"Shake hands. I am James Reward, from New York. My father, the head of the family on this side of the world, has taken to the woods—but let me welcome you to the family seat. Sit down. Make yourself at home."

John laughed and shook hands with James.

"You are very kind," he said. "Excuse me while I see to the pitching of our tents."

After the tents were pitched, John de la Reward introduced the other members of his party to James Reward and old Jessie Sabatis. Amos Dingle had heard of James long ago as a little boy who had been driven from home by the cruelty of his father and step-mother, and was deeply impressed by the sight of him big and alive and smoking a twenty cent cigar. James told them that he had come into the wilderness to see his father after a separation of forty years, and that his father was so determined and confirmed a recluse that he had immediately paddled away; and he mentioned a shooting accident and told of the heroic exertions of Jessie at length.

"Has Jessie been your only companion all through your illness?" asked June.

"No, I had two other companions until yesterday," replied James. "One went up stream yesterday morning, to try to find something for me to eat. He didn't come back, so the other went after him—the darned young fool! I am worried about them; and if they don't show up to-night I shall have to ask you people to organize a search party."

"Of course, we will look for your friends, whenever you say the word," said John de la Reward. "What do you think has happened to them?"

"I am afraid that Sayle, who went away first, has met with trouble." said James. "There are some troublesome characters loose in these woods just now, and I fear that he has run foul of them. But he was armed; and if any man should know how to use a rifle, he is the man."

"Sayle is not a common name," remarked John.

" Unless my memory plays me false, that is the name of the young man who first made me aware of your existence, James. He was a military man—a captain ; yes, and he had been awarded the Military Cross. He called on me, in London, and told me of you. I think I mentioned his visit to you at the time, June ? "

" Yes, thank you—and you lost his address," replied June.

" That is the very man, Captain Robert Sayle," said James. " He is the son of my late employer. He happened along here soon after I got hurt, quite by chance. He wasn't looking for me, though it was important that he should see me on a very important matter of business. He didn't know I was here. You say that he is a friend of yours, John ? "

" I should be glad to say so, though we met only once."

" Did he know you and Miss June planned a trip to Fisher Creek ? "

" I may have told him so, when we were talking over the family."

" Is he a friend of yours, Miss June ? "

" I have never met him."

Mr. MacLean went fishing, taking the guide with him. June refused the mighty hunter's invitation to accompany him and made tea instead. John drank a mug of tea and retired to his tent to jot down notes for a new book which was to be entitled *Family Descent*, and of which his cousin Poddington was to be the inspiration and the argument. Jessie told her patient to retire to his bunk, and June went down to the stream and sat on the top of the bank. If she had glanced down stream

—which she didn't—she would have seen the mighty hunter standing upright in a canoe and making brilliant casts of gaudy salmon-flies with one hand while he crushed mosquitoes on his face and neck with the other ; and if she had been as near to him as the guide was she would have heard a lot of vivid language. But she sat and gazed steadily up stream, out of ear-shot of Ian's mood and heedless of his whereabouts.

A canoe came around a black point into the girl's field of vision. It contained four men. One who sat amidships had a bandage of some sort around his head. June got to her feet and backed a little way into the bushes, but not far enough to lose sight of the canoe. Presently she recognized the ex-soldier with whom she had spoken in Dan Whalen's store at Plaster Rock ; and, a moment later, she knew the man with the bandaged head for the person who had caught her eye on several occasions in London. She peered out and down at him coolly for a second or two, amused at the situation; and then she suddenly realised that he, an experienced and full-grown man, one bred to New York and Paris and London and the battlefields of Europe, had come to this forsaken river for no other reason in the world than the chance of finding here a person whom he had seen only twice in his life and with whom he had never exchanged a word—and that she was that person. There was something fearful in this. She felt a sudden, choking glow, then a chill of terror. What did it all mean ? What had he seen in her eyes, away back there in London ? She felt that something was at work for which she was not responsible, something she could neither control nor understand, something that was

beyond her intention as it was beyond her knowledge. Her amusement was turned to fear. She stepped back into the screen of willows, turned and hurried to the tent where John de la Reward was writing.

John looked up at her, then jumped to his feet.

"My dear girl!" he exclaimed. "Sit down here. here is my flask? What has happened? Here, swallow a good nip of this. Are you ill?"

She sat down on a dunnage bag and covered her face with her hands.

"Are you laughing or crying?" asked John. "My dear girl! My dear child! Take just a sip of this and then tell me about it."

She withdrew her hands and looked up at him, smiling.

"I was laughing," she said.

"Thank heaven!" he exclaimed. "Tell me the joke."

But she didn't tell him—because she didn't know.

CHAPTER XV

COINCIDENCE

THE canoe ran ashore and Tom Snicken stepped over the bow and looked up at the white tops of the tents.

"They are here, sir," he said.

"And what about my face?" asked Bob, following him. "Is it too badly chipped to stand a shave?"

"I can manage it," replied Tom. "And we must find a clean bandage for your head. Sneak for our tent, sir, and I'll follow in a minute."

Bob reached his tent without meeting anyone. He heard a low murmur of two voices from the new tent on his right. He sat down on an up-ended biscuit box and wondered what was likely to happen next. Was he playing with moonshine or lightning? What reason was he to give to John de la Reward for being on Fisher Creek? A number of other daunting details occurred to him—little things which had been entirely overlooked in the big, general sweep of his madness.

Tom entered the tent.

"Noel Sabatis has toddled along to the shack to hear what his mother thinks of him, and Malachi has gone down to Plaster Rock," he whispered. "I've trusted

him with the canoe, sir. He'll bring it back in a few days. He is expecting something at Plaster Rock, sir. I should like to know what it is. He doesn't look like a man with a mystery, sir."

"Life itself is a mystery," said Bob. "Death is another; and our friend Malachi isn't the only other. Tom, my wind is up!—and yet until I saw those two tents I was bold as a lion. There is another mystery for you. How am I to look as if I came here by accident when she sees me?"

"Don't worry about that, sir," said Tom cheerfully. "Your face looks the part. Accident is the word. I'll get some warm water from old Jessie and see what I can do with it; and while I'm gone you had better make a bandage out of your clean shirt, sir."

Tom was gone for fully twenty minutes, owing to the questions which were put to him by James Reward. While he was away, Bob looked up a clean shirt and tore a strip out of the back of it. He was trying to tie this around his head when someone scratched on the closed flap of the tent. He invited the scratcher in and John de la Reward entered, smiling his kindliest smile.

Bob feigned astonishment.

"You, sir?" he exclaimed. "You on Fisher Creek! You are Mr. John de la Reward, whom I once met in London, aren't you?"

"Undoubtedly so, my dear fellow," replied John, shaking hands cordially. "I heard a little while ago from your old friend James Reward, that you were here. This is a happy coincidence, our visiting Fisher Creek at the same time. You look as if you had been in a fight."

Bob saw safety in the subject of the fight. He narrated his adventures of the last thirty hours in detail.

"I do not wonder at James's anxiety about his father," said John. "So that is what Poddington is doing. And you say he is mad? There is no insanity on the Reward side of his family, that I have ever heard of. What a world it is!—crammed with extraordinary situations and accidents as well as with astonishing coincidences. You may remember, my dear Captain Sayle, that we were talking of Poddington Reward in London, at the time of our first and only previous meeting; and now when we accidentally meet again, away up here in the woods, I find that you have just escaped with your life from a mad Poddington. Very strange!"

"You are right, sir. It is amazing. I feel bewildered."

"And well you may, Sayle. Life is a chapter of accidents, grave and gay. Little did I dream that I should meet you here when we talked about Fisher Creek in London."

Bob opened his mouth, but closed it again without speaking.

"The fact that up to then you had not contemplated a trip to Fisher Creek makes the coincidence of our meeting here now all the more remarkable," continued John.

"I think so, too," said Bob.

Tom Snicken entered the tent at that moment, with a kettle of water in his hand, and found Mr. de la Reward chuckling and Bob's red, damaged face reddened with confusion.

" Though exploded as an instance of coincidence, yet it remains a very interesting situation," said John.

Then he left the tent, still chuckling.

" What makes him feel so good ? " asked Tom. " Did you crack a joke, sir, or did he ? "

" It's on me, whoever cracked it," said Bob. " He knows that I came here looking for him—which means for her—unless he's a fool. I told him so. Gave him the tip like a bunch of flowers. Laid it in his arms. What do you suppose he thinks of my cheek ? "

" He doesn't seem to mind it much, sir. Perhaps he doesn't take it as seriously as we do ; for he must know that you and the young lady have never met. I must say, sir, that if you try to see it from his point of view, it doesn't look very serious—not very serious, even as a bit of cheek."

" Don't you take it seriously ? " demanded Bob.

" No, sir ! You know I do. But I am on the inside, so to speak. I saw her look at you once ; and I am neither her father or adopted father. If she ever lamped me like that all the clever gents in *Who's Who* might laugh till they bust themselves, for all I'd care."

The attempt at shaving was not a success, for Bob's face had been barked or punctured in half-a-dozen places. He had received these injuries after Noel Sabatis had hit him on the back of the head and he had fallen into Pod Reward's lap. Tom tore into strips what remained of the clean shirt and bandaged the face as well as the head. He brought Bob's supper to him in the tent.

Noel Sabatis was in disgrace. Three times during the evening, old Jessie took him out of ear-shot of the

others and told him what she thought of his behaviour and feared for his future if he persisted in the error of his ways. On one of these occasions James Reward snatched from the fire and devoured four slices of bacon. After this exploit he sat very still and quiet for an hour, with the air of one who awaits the blowing of a mine at some uncertain point in his immediate vicinity ; but as nothing untoward happened within the hour, he slipped away to the guide's fire and sampled the bacon there. After that he drank a pint of Jessie's herb tea without a word of protest and joined John and June and the mighty hunter at their evening meal. There Jessie found him and sat down beside him, determined to save him from his own appetite.

Noel made himself at home with Amos and Tom when deserted by his mother. He sat very close to Amos, who was twice as big as Tom ; and as the night advanced and the darkness increased he edged himself nearer and nearer to the fire. He was afraid. For him all the darkness around was haunted by Pod Reward. In the excitement of the day he had openly flaunted his real feelings toward Pod in the face of Pod, had drawn the fire of that terrible fellow and brazenly gripped that devil by the wind-pipe—but now the excitement had died away like the din of a lost battle, and the sun was below the edge of the world, and evil things were abroad under cover of the dark.

Bob sat in his tent and listened to the voices at the fires without. The guide's fire was fairly between him and the river, the other fire a dozen yards to the right, and the wavering yellow radiance danced on the sloping roof of his tent and a little of it seeped through

the canvas. It was a time for serious thought, and so he did his best to think—but without much success. He felt rather than thought. He felt as an explorer in a strange land might feel upon suddenly realizing that he had gone a great deal farther and faster than he knew; or as a reckless hunter following the track of a deer and suddenly confronted by a tiger; or as a light-hearted bayonet-man looking for souvenirs and finding a hostile machine-gun nest. In short, he felt the seriousness of his position. He had hunted, considering only himself and the fine excitements of the chase; and now he realized that the quarry was to be reckoned with. He had trailed moonshine; and now he knew that when one lays hands on moonshine it changes in a twinkling to something of substance or slips away from the eager fingers to nothing. It can no longer be nothing but moonshine, which is simply a trick of the sun and the human eye and the dead moon's face. It must become more or less, something or nothing.

His feelings were taking him beyond his depth. He sighed and lit his pipe and wished that Tom would look in and cheer him up. A bulky shadow showed on the flap of the tent and someone thrust a head in. It was James Reward.

James congratulated Bob on his escape from Poddington Reward. He agreed with Bob that the old man was mad.

"I must catch him and then find keepers for him—good men like Amos Dingle—and leave him up here in the woods," he said. "It would be worse than murder to put the poor old devil in an insane asylum; it would be putting him in hell before his time. He will kill his

keepers, I suppose ; but I am willing to pay them well to take the chance. He threw a proper scare into Noel Sabatis. Well, I must get after the old boy as soon as I feel a bit stronger on my legs. Will you be here to lend me a hand in the chase ; do you think ? "

" I think so," replied Bob. " I hope so."

" Don't you know ? You are a free man, Bob."

" But I'm restless."

" That is natural enough. What do you think of my new cousins, the de la Rewards ? You know them, don't you ? Some cousins, what ?

" Yes, I think they are very interesting people."

" That's what I thought you thought, Bob."

" What do you mean, Jim ? "

" I mean that any man who was lucky enough to know that young woman would think her interesting.

" See here, Jim, if you want me to tell you something, ask me. But you needn't trouble yourself. I'll tell you what you evidently want to know, as we are old friends. I met Mr. de la Reward once, in London. I called on him—and he returned the call to-day. I have never met or spoken to the girl, but I have seen her. I saw her in a crowd, in a public place, in London. She looked at me and I looked at her—and a fat man stamped on my toes, and a thin lady picked my pockets, without distracting my attention. I looked some more and she looked some more. Later I saw her again under very similar circumstances ; and again she looked at me and I looked at her."

" Were you drunk ? "

" I wasn't ; and I don't think she was. She didn't look it."

"And then you happened to meet her father."

"No, I didn't. Tom shadowed them, tracked them home, learned his name and looked him up in *Who's Who.* Then I called—in cold blood; and in cold blood I pretended that I wanted to know if Mr. John de la Reward was related to my friend Mr. James Reward of New York. John and I hit it off very well together; and he promised to invite me to dinner; and I left my address with him. The dinner invitation never came, so I called again and found them gone. Then I remembered what he had said about his cousin in the woods; and that is the whole story. I hope you like it Jim—and I don't give a damn if you do or not! If you are going to call me a fool I'll save you the trouble by agreeing with you before you say it. On the other hand, I may as well tell you now that I don't consider my goings and comings to be any business of yours. I am my own master; and what money I have is my own; and when I need more I'll make it."

"Don't knock me about your money, Bob, for I stood your friend in that matter from the beginning. I want to talk business with you to-morrow, if you feel up to it by then. Business, mind you; for I don't think this other matter is worth talking about. I have heard of eighteen-year-old boys doing that sort of thing—and half-wits—and ordinary damn fools. No sane man could take it seriously enough to waste five words on it. I suppose you have done the same sort of thing fifty times during the war. Rot! Pure idiocy! So utterly foolish as to be harmless. If I saw anything to worry about I might take it seriously. So we won't talk about it."

"Righto! In that case, may I ask if you have finished telling me all the things you aren't going to say about it?"

"Good-night, Bob."

"Good-night, Jim. Don't forget the business talk to-morrow. By the way, is it my business or your's we are to discuss?"

"What are you driving at? Yours, of course."

"Just as you say, Jim. If I have any business that you know anything about, we'll discuss it—but if you—oh, forget it! Go to bed."

Bob Sayle kept to his tent all the next dny. His face was much better, but his head was so sore that it hurt like a toothache right through to his eyes. James Reward did not call to discuss Bob's business, but was kept to his bunk by a slight return of fever and the hard hand of old Jessie. Recent excitement had been too much for him in his enfeebled state—and perhaps the bacon had been an indiscretion. The day passed quietly. John de la Reward told his new cousin that it was his firm intention to remain on the creek until Poddington was found. John also paid a short and cheery call on Bob, took a short walk in the woods, went for a swim, exchanged a few of his views on life with Jessie and wrote three pages of *Dead Generals* and five of *Family Descent.* June and Mr. MacLean went fishing in the morning, guarded by Amos Dingle with the rifle and Tom Snicken. Noel Sabatis kept close to his mother's scanty skirts and looked frequently over his shoulder. Poor Noel! His neck was stiff and painful and his nerves were on edge.

The fishing was fair. Two small salmon and a dozen

half-pound trout were caught; but this was not good enough for Mr. MacLean. He was accustomed to larger game, and said so. He considered Fisher Creek a poor piece of water, and said so. The best fishing in the world was not exciting enough for him, he said. He was used to sport with a spice of danger in it. June paid no attention to him, though every grumble was addressed to her across the narrow strip of water between the two drifting canoes.

"If it is excitement you are looking for, sir, all you've got to do is go about ten miles up stream, unarmed, and spend the night ashore there," said Tom Snicken.

"Really," replied the mighty hunter, glancing across at the little fellow who managed the upper hold on his paddle by gripping with his elbow instead of with his hand.

"Really and truly," answered Tom.

During the afternoon, June met Tom and asked why he had been rude to Mr. MacLean.

"Because I don't like him, Miss de la Reward," said Tom.

"But why?" she asked.

"I don't know yet—unless it is that he reminds me of a sergeant-major I once knew to my cost—but I feel that it is more than that."

The camp was quiet by ten o'clock that night. At eleven-thirty the inhabitants of the tents were awakened by shrill yells. They turned out and rushed to the shack, where they found old Jessie Sabatis yelling and fighting a fire that curled and roared against the outer wall on the up-river side.

CHAPTER XVI

TRYING TO REMEMBER

MAJOR ARCHER WALLACE was at once one of the most susceptible and one of the most impervious of men—impervious to the unnerving demands of fear and susceptible to the equally unnerving influences of feminine charms.

The son of a well-to-do New Yorker of an adventurous disposition, Archer had been bred early to a straight-thinking, straight-hitting, hard-riding way of life; and so, prompted by beliefs and tastes that had been born and bred in him, he had joined a battalion of Canadian infantry in the early days of the Great War. He had served with distinction about Ypres, before Messines, on the Somme, at and around Vimy and again in the north. Admired and loved by his comrades of all ranks, and pointed out by them as one who lived a charmed life—("Ain't I seen stuff hop off him as if he was a pill-box," said a sergeant whose word it would be suicide to question)—he at last suffered a terrific experience which no one less hardy and less lucky would have survived for a day. Archer side-stepped the grave and recovered his health, side-stepped insanity and recovered his wits; and then, finding himself whole again in every-

thing but memory, he went cheerfully about the business of life and hoped for the best. He comforted himself with the reflection that beyond a doubt many of the things forgotten were better not remembered.

He soon discovered that field memories came back to him easily. To see one face familiar to him in France and Flanders was to give back to his brain, in the twinkling of an eye, all his old knowledge of a battery or a battalion or some particular fight or merry-making. This discovery caused him anxiety at first, for he had no wish to remember the details of that terrific experience that had crushed and tortured his mind to blankness; but reason comforted him on that score, pointing out that as he was the sole survivor of that experience he was safe from the mischance of an illuminating encounter. He remembered his pre-war past—everything up to his first fight; and his fights came back to him in circumscribed but glowing pictures as he met fighting comrades. But the key to his purely peaceful days and nights of war-time life seemed to be irrevocably lost. He knew that he had gone on leave to England on every opportunity—once in '15, twice in '16—well, five or six times in all; and yet for all he could remember of those wonderful flashes of life he might just as well have remained with his battalion. Not a bath, not a dinner, not a show could he remember of all his leaves; and he knew himself well enough to suspect that he had forgotten something even more worth while than dinners and shows.

One afternoon the Major went to see the mighty hunter, because he felt restless, and bored with himself, and could not think of anything better to do at that

particular moment. He was in that mood when even the change from being bored by oneself to being gassed by someone else is a relief. His bag was ready packed for the seaside, at a certain point of which he had arranged to come in contact with his devoted parents some time during the next day. But he was not keen about the seaside, or about any place in particular. He was lonely for a life that he and the world had outlived and a company that had dispersed. How good to him now would look the worst Canadian infantryman who had ever served with him, how wise and sane the flightiest subaltern who had ever argued with him, how reasonable and dear even a divisional commander looking hopefully for polished brass in the fire-trench. You who knew them know!

He called on Ian MacLean because the mighty hunter's stories always amused him. Or was it the man himself who amused him?

The butler came to the door and informed the Major that Mr. MacLean had gone away.

"Then heaven help the lions and tigers!" exclaimed Archer.

"You are mistaken, sir," said the butler. "He has gone to Canada, with Mr. and Miss de la Reward, who were our guests for a time, sir. He has taken a number of fishing-rods."

"Mr. John de la Reward?"

"The same, sir. A very great man. They have gone to a place called Fisher Creek, sir, on the Tobique River, in New Brunswick."

Archer went to his club, walking all the way with an introspective look in his eyes. He passed several

people he knew without seeing them. He sat for a long time in the silent reading-room with *Who's Who* open before him. Suddenly he started violently in his chair—so violently that a gentleman reading a bound volume of *Punch* at a near-by table looked up enquiringly. What the reader of *Punch* saw caused him to get swiftly to his feet and break the rule of silence.

"Are you ill, Wallace?" he cried, staring; and even as he stared the colour came back to the other's face.

"No, I'm all right, thanks," replied Archer, with an embarrassed smile. "Remembered something suddenly, that's all—something important that I had forgotten ever since I was hurt that time, you know."

He went out of the room hurriedly, leaving the fat red book open on the table. The reader of *Punch* left his own table and sought in vain in the two pages under his eye for a suggestion concerning the nature of the Major's sudden memory.

Archer went to his rooms and packed two more bags and sent a long telegram to his mother. He tried to quiet his heart and steady his brain with whisky.

On the train between New York and Boston the chair across the aisle from Archer's chair was occupied by a young woman of unusually attractive appearance. Archer noticed her, in spite of the excitement of that sudden important memory. Perhaps his excitement showed in his face, for once he glanced at her and found her looking at him. But that didn't happen again. Archer found his seat in the Pullman on the north-bound train from Boston, sat down in it for long enough to fill his cigarette-case from a box in one of his bags, and then

started for the smoke-room at the end of the car. He made one step—and then his glance encountered, for a fraction of a second, the glance of an extraordinarily attractive-looking young woman in the seat opposite. It was the girl of the chair across the way. She was the first to break the glance, which was in danger of becoming a stare. Archer made another start and reached the smoker.

A freight train goes from a town that reposes at a point eighty miles from the south of the big river many miles farther up to the village of Plaster Rock. Its accommodation for passengers is not extensive or elaborate, but there is no law or bye-law against your buying a ticket and trying it. In speed it has the average leave-train between Bethune and Boulogne beaten by several miles in the hour.

Archer Wallace entered that part of the train that stands for someone's expression of passenger accommodation and immediately beheld his opposite number of the parlour-car and the Pullman. She sat with her attractive back to him, six seats from the door. He hesitated for a moment, then went forward, confronted her fairly and lifted his hat.

"Please don't think that I am trying to be fresh," he said. "It is all chance, as far as I am concerned. I am bound for Plaster Rock."

She smiled; and he sat down in front of her.

"So am I," she said.

"But I think it is a jumping-off place for fishing and all that sort of thing," he said. "People usually go in parties, I believe."

"My party is already up there somewhere, and I am to be met by a guide and a canoe at Plaster Rock."

"You are lucky. I am going up in search of people who are not expecting me."

"That is a service badge, isn't it?"

"Yes. I don't wear it usually, there are so many badges of sorts knocking about town; but I put it up last night. It is a Canadian badge."

"I thought you were an American."

"I am—though I can't imagine how you guessed it. But I fought with the Canadians. My name is Wallace and my home is New York."

"I used to know a New York man who joined an English regiment. I wonder if you met him over there. It sounds silly, I know—but there is just a chance that you did."

"A chance in several millions. No, the chance is less than that—the chance of knowing if I met him, at least, for my memory is not what it used to be. But I'll do my best."

"His name is Robert Sayle, and he was a captain when I last heard of him, and they gave him a Military Cross."

"Sayle? That is the name, of course! So you have seen him lately, and he has told you about our meetings and the dinner I gave him. Isn't that so?"

"I haven't seen him for years; and I am sure nobody has ever mentioned you to me. But you know him?"

"I have met him twice—the first time at Vimy, two years ago, and the other day in New York. Now that

I come to think of it, he may be somewhere up in these woods, for he told me he was going north to New Brunswick, to a place called Fisherman's Creek—or it may have been Fisher Creek. I wonder if it was Fisher Creek ? "

" But don't you know ? "

" I don't, honest. I didn't pay much attention to what he said at the time, and only remembered it afterwards."

He told her of his encounter with Bob Sayle on Lower Fifth Avenue and of the dinner in Bob's honour at which Ian MacLean, the mighty hunter, had been a guest.

" And now I am wondering if he doesn't happen to be a member of the party you are going to join ? " he concluded.

" Then you had better wonder about something else, for he doesn't happen to be one of my party," she replied. " If he is on the river, it is news to me. Until you told me that you had seen him recently in New York, I thought he was still in England. But why did you mention Fisher Creek, if he told you he was going to Fisherman's Creek ? What do you know of Fisher Creek ? "

" Nothing beyond the fact that it is my destination. I don't suppose it happens to be yours, too, by any happy chance ? "

" In that case we may meet again," she replied, and looked thoughtfully out of the window.

Archer, too, suddenly felt introspectively inclined. He excused himself and went forward to the baggage car and had a smoke with the conductor. He wondered

why the girl had not told him her name. She had told nothing about herself—not even the name of the place she was bound for beyond Plaster Rock. What did she suspect him of? She had seemed friendly enough. When he returned to the other car he found the girl pretending to be asleep. He knew she was pretending, because her head did not roll and slip about against the back of the seat with the rocking and jolting of the train. She held it composed and motionless, but with a muscular effort that was perceptible to a close observer. So he seated himself a long way off and pretended to read a book. Sportive jumps of the train frequently came within a finger-pinch of yanking the volume away from him—but he became indignant and stubborn and stuck to it. When the girl pretended to wake up, he closed the book and pretended to sleep; and while he pretended to sleep he thought of the amazing cause of his journey to Fisher Creek. He thought of June de la Reward and London, gradually recalling to mind more and more of these things. But he did not remember all, and he failed to get June's face clear for more than a second at a time to his mind's eye.

At last Archer actually went to sleep. But it was not for long. No sooner were his muscles thoroughly relaxed and his watchful brain off wool-gathering than an exceptionally violent and tricky jolt and squirm combined shot him half-way out of the seat. He pulled himself together and looked at the girl. She laughed. He staggered toward her.

"You took a grave risk when you really let yourself go to sleep," she said.

Just then the train commenced humping itself to a standstill. Four humps and three jumps and a clattering slide brought it to rest amid piles of sawn lumber. The conductor looked in from the baggage car and announced Plaster Rock. A large, bearded man entered and murmured a few words to the girl and then picked up her bags. She followed him from the train to the platform, without a word of farewell to Major Archer Wallace.

The big fellow with the beard was Amos Dingle, who had received Mr. John de la Reward's permission to convey Mr. James Reward from Fisher Creek to the village and back again. Amos had served his country abroad with shaven chin and cheeks; but now he let hair grow on him wherever it saw fit, in the first reaction of unmilitary conditions trying to hide a good soldier behind wild but indifferent whiskers. But he shaved them off again before autumn and fought a man from across the height-of-land for refusing to believe that he had been a sergeant in the army.

Amos led Alice Reward straight through the village and beyond it to where the canoe lay half out of the water behind a screen of willows. Near the canoe sat a man without whiskers or moustache, smoking a cigar. He was framed as high and broad as Amos, but he carried just enough flesh to keep his skin from sticking to his bones. He wore one arm in a sling; and upon catching sight of Alice—which was not until she had rounded the willows within a few yards of him—he jumped to his feet and embraced her with his free arm. She struggled violently.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Won't you let your poor father kiss you?" "I didn't know you," she said. "How ill you must have been, poor man! You used to be so thick—and now; but you look very distinguished as you are, dad."

"My child, feast your eyes now on my distinguished appearance while you have the chance, for I'll be as thick and undistinguished as ever I was in three weeks' time, if eating everything I can lay my hands on will thicken me."

The sun was at the edge of the western hills. They embarked; the father and daughter amidships, back to back, Alice's baggage in the bow, and Amos Dingle in the stern to do the work. They were to go ashore in an hour or so and boil the kettle and dine in peace. In the meantime Alice ate soda crackers and cheese which Amos had bought at the store for her and drank lime-juice from a flask.

James told his daughter the truth about his wounded shoulder and the present situation and suspected mental condition of her grandfather. He sketched his own childhood and Poddington's character lightly. The information concerning her grandfather was a shock to Alice, for all she had ever heard before of her father's origin was that it was both humble and rural. James told her not to feel too badly about her Reward blood.

"The Rewards were great folk in the past, and in England they are great folk still," he said; and he told her of Cousin John who even now sat writing by candle light in a tent on Fisher Creek, of John's adopted daughter June, and of all John had told him of the

highly respectable and sometimes distinguished family of de la Reward. He talked of old Jessie Sabatis, who had doctored and nursed him with so much skill and devotion, and of her old son Noel who had been a crony of Poddington's for years, but who now lived in terror every moment of his ex-companion. Last of all, he informed her of the fact that Bob Sayle was on Fisher Creek.

Alice started slightly, but did not speak immediately.

"Did you send for him?" she asked, after a silence during which James puffed with nervous haste at his cigar.

"No. He came here without any hint or suggestion on my part—not knowing I was anywhere in this country."

"It was chance, then?"

He let that pass, pretending not to hear it.

"You remember his father's nonsense, Dad. Do you think that he was ever foolish enough to talk that way to Bob?"

"I believe he was. He frightened Bob in some way. You know what I mean, kid, so I won't apologise. He threatened Bob's freedom with a wife of his choosing—and Bob didn't want a wife then, even of his own choice. As for you—well, he hasn't seen you for nearly seven years—or is it longer? Think of it! You were not even a flapper then, and Bob is no more of a prophet than other young men. He'll get the surprise of his life when he sees you to-morrow morning."

"Are you thinking of throwing me at his head, dad?"

"Why not? You are heart-free and he is the best

man of his age and weight I know. He is a fine fellow, Alice; and it would help him."

They landed within a few miles of the mouth of Fisher Creek and Amos made a fire and hung a kettle to boil. They embarked again within the hour. It was a dark, windless night, with few stars.

James told of Bob Sayle's adventures on the headwaters of the stream with the mad Poddington, and of the mysterious fire against the outer wall of the shack, and of Noel's constant fear of being attacked from ambush. He told her that since then fire guards were set every night, for fear of her energetic grandfather; and that John de la Reward was writing a book about the head of the Canadian branch of the house, to be entitled *Family Descent.* He told her about the mighty hunter from New York who had come in with the de la Rewards and of his first meeting with Bob Sayle on the Creek. Bob had been able to shave at last and had presented himself to the de la Reward party for the first time in the middle of the mid-day meal, and before he could say how-d'ye-do this fellow MacLean had grabbed him by the collar and demanded his diamonds. Of course, Bob hadn't his diamonds; but between them they told the story of the after-dinner party at the hunter's house.

"It is absurd!" exclaimed Alice. "Am I dreaming or is the world only a mile round?—or is the entire population of New York coming to this river? Dad, I heard about that party and Mr. MacLean's Brazilian diamonds, to-day on the train. Who was the man who gave the original dinner—the party that began it all?"

"Major Archer Wallace, the chap who lived all alone in No-man's-land for a week or more, wounded. He met Bob on the avenue and remembered having borrowed cigarettes from him once in the middle of a fight. So he gave the dinner in Bob's honour and invited MacLean. Who told you about it?"

"The Major himself. He told me his name was Wallace. He is back there at Plaster Rock now—unless he is already on his way up. He is coming to Fisher Creek to see some people who don't expect him. I wonder who they are?"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed James. "If your poor grandfather foresaw this, I don't blame him for taking to the woods and cutting up rough. We may as well build a hotel, and advertise in the guide-book. This is getting a trifle too much for me. If it wasn't for the old man being loose in the woods with a box of matches I would get out of here to-morrow."

They turned into the dark and narrow mouth of Fisher Creek. Amos stowed his pole in-board and sat down to the paddle. He stroked strongly but without a splash, sliding the canoe up against the slow current with no more than a wet whisper of sound. Fire-flies sailed an occasional spark against the walls of darkness. The sky was only a few shades lighter than the wooded banks. A mile further up, the current ran swifter—but the guide stuck to his paddle. Alice dozed a little. Furtive sounds came to them from the shores, and here and there the stream whispered over a knob of rock, and now and again a fish jumped and fell back with a tinkling flop. The air was sweet and racy with the scents of ferns and spruce-tips and wild grasses and

wild gums. A whip-poor-will blew his melancholy flute in the fastness of ancient cedars. The current slowed again, and again quickened ; and still Amos the tireless one sent the canoe up and up toward the ancient clearing that Pod Reward's father had made in the wilderness for himself and his wife Molly.

About three miles below the clearing, for a distance of close upon a mile, the water ran slower and deeper than anywhere else in the whole length of the river. Here old cedars, undermined by many floods, aired clawing roots and hung their heads far out over the water. In the depths lay great trout, dark-skinned, black-mouthed, with yellow, earth-flavoured flesh.

Alice was dozing with both eyes closed when the canoe came into this deep and slow water. A few stars showed pale overhead, but no gleam reached the black surface of the stream.

" Sit steady, Miss," said Amos Dingle.

Alice opened her eyes, wondering who had spoken and what had been said. She felt bewildered for a moment, forgetting where she was.

" What are you doing, kid ? " asked her father.

" Are we foul of a snag or somethin', Miss ? " asked the guide.

" I don't know," she answered ; and then, " something has hold of the canoe ? " she cried.

" Steady," said Amos. " Strike a match, Mister. Kick out at it, Miss—but don't upset us."

The canoe listed to the left sharply. Alice felt something wet drip on her ankles. She snatched her foot back and shot it straight out with all the force of her leg. Her heel struck something solid and alive. She

kicked again ; and just then the canoe righted and the flame of Jim's match flared on the dark and made a little circle of yellow light. Something splashed. Amos dug his paddle deep and put his back and shoulders and hips into the stroke. The canoe jumped forward and mighty eddies span away from the paddle.

No one spoke until that mile of deep water was astern.

CHAPTER XVII

"WHAT was it?" asked Alice.

"The devil, I think," said James. "A devil of some sort, for sure."

"Maybe it was a bear," said Amos Dingle.

They went ashore and made camp half-a-mile below the clearing, for they did not want to disturb the others at that hour. They pitched a small tent for Alice that the guide had brought in from the village, and the men lay down on their blankets by the fire. James Reward did not sleep, for the adventure in the dark had shaken his nerve. As soon as Amos began to snore, James sat up. Then he carried the canoe up to within six feet of the tent. He gathered wood for the fire and found a water-worn root that would do for a club if need be. Armed with the club, he sat down between the fire and the front of the tent and smoked and waited for dawn.

When daylight was fully established, James awakened Amos and lay back to sleep until the coffee and bacon were ready. It seemed to him that he had no more than

closed his eyes before he was shaken wide awake by a muscular hand. He sat up and found breakfast ready and Alice folding blankets.

"Was it you brought the canoe up here, mister?" asked Amos.

James nodded. "Thought it would be safer," he said.

"That's right enough, sir—but who slashed her through and through?" asked the other.

James scrambled to his feet and looked at the canoe. Sure enough a knife had been slipped between her ribs, clean through her oiled and varnished canvas, in five places.

"There is your confounded bear, again," he said.

They did a temporary job on the cuts with gum from the spruces close at hand, then struck camp and finished their journey. They were very early, and only Jessie Sabatis was awake to welcome them.

James looked into Bob Sayle's tent and found both its occupants sound asleep. They had been on guard all night. He entered, woke Bob and told him in an apologetic whisper that Alice had arrived.

"I thought I'd warn you, Bob, for I know your father used to worry you with some nonsense about her," he explained. "I want you to forget all that—and like her if you feel that way. She has grown a lot since you saw her last. I sent for her while I was still feeling sick, you know. She didn't know you were here until I told her so last night.

"She was a very charming kid, as I remember her," said Bob. "I hope we can make her comfortable here. I don't suppose she knows anything about that fool idea of my father's."

"But she does. That is why she feels a bit shy about meeting you. She is afraid that you will think that I am throwing her at your head."

"Hardly that, under the circumstances. By the way, Jim, you spoke of wanting to have a business talk with me some days ago. The idea has just popped into my head that the business you have in mind may possibly have to do with the millions my father didn't leave me. What about it?"

"You are right, Bob."

"Perhaps there is a string to my disinheritance? Perhaps it is not irrevocably lost?"

"You are right again, Bob."

"Then all I have to say is——"

"One moment! Don't say it! You have a right to demand an explanation from me—but I beg you not to do so now, Bob. I beg you to wait. I promise to tell you everything and show you everything, when we return to New York. You will lose nothing by waiting; and the chances are that you will gain nothing; but I ask you to wait. I was not a party to your father's well-intentioned but—but—to his plans for your future, or to his efforts to guide you in the past. I swear it; and I also swear that I was not at all in sympathy with his attitude toward you. Will you oblige me in this matter, Bob?"

"Of course I'll wait! I'll wait fifty years, if you say so—for the business does not interest me in the least. I have my ten thousand; and I don't care a hoot in hell who has the rest! My father treated me like a child before his death, and—oh, forget it! I'll be out in two shakes to welcome Alice to this extraordinary camp. I suppose she does her hair up now, and all that sort of thing?"

"Thank you, Bob. You are a generous man. Yes, she does her hair up."

Nothing could have been more natural than Alice Reward's quick and pleased smile at sight of Bob Sayle. She ran forward to meet him, and the clasp of her hand was frank and vigorous. She had been proud of him years ago, before he had done anything to be proud of; and now she was very proud of him. She laughed at the astonishment which her vastly altered appearance caused him. Then the same thought flashed in both their minds and each saw it in the other's eyes. So they both talked very fast for a few minutes, until that thought was well masked. Then Bob introduced her to her new cousins John and June, and to Mr. Ian MacLean.

Bob and June were getting along promisingly on rather unusual terms. Neither had said a word to the other about previous encounters. Bob had not mentioned his call on John in London, and June had not referred to it. She had not asked him his reason for coming to Fisher Creek, and he had not let a word escape him that might suggest

that he knew that she knew. Both were playing the game, and the same game, by mutual but unspoken agreement.

Tom Snicken was not so reticent, however. He frequently spoke to June of the amazing thing that had happened so suddenly to the Captain, in far-away London; and she never refused to listen.

"And from the first instant I saw you I understood and was with him," he once told her. "Of course it was my duty to tell him he was a fool—but neither of us believed it for a moment. He didn't care any more for what I said than for what his guv'nor wrote to him."

On these occasions the girl listened but refrained from asking questions.

After introducing Alice to the others, Bob and Tom breakfasted hurriedly and went up stream in a canoe with the rifle and a coil of rope, in quest of Pod Reward. They spent most of their time now, day and night, in hunting for the old fellow or in guarding the camp against him. The two girls and the mighty hunter went fishing, afoot, with explicit orders from James and John not to go out of ear-shot of the clearing. John de la Reward and Amos Dingle went inland, also with a small coil of rope, leaving old Jessie and Noel and James Reward in camp. Noel had his duck-gun ready, you may be sure. James retired to his bunk, tired from yesterday's exertions and excitements.

To return to Major Archer Wallace and Plaster Rock and the evening before. Archer staggered to the hotel

with his bags and demanded supper, a guide, a canoe and a camping outfit. They gave him supper first. After he had eaten heartily, the hotel-keeper sat down at the table.

"You ought to have telegraphed in for a guide two weeks ago, sir," he said. "That's how most of the sports does. There ain't many reg'lar sportin' guides here, an' now they're all engaged. Maybe yor not wantin' to go a great ways up?"

"Not more than twenty miles," replied Archer, who had studied the map.

"I got a canoe and tent and blankets I kin hire out to you for two dollars a day, and young Malachi Davis says he'll take you up river, but he won't stop away from Plaster Rock more'n a couple of days at a time," said the other. "How'd that suit you?"

"Fine," returned Archer. "Can he get away to-night?"

"There ain't a moon. You'd best wait till mornin' unless yer in a all-fired desperate hurry. But I'll git Malachi to come and talk to you. He ain't a reg'lar guide and he's a new-comer to these parts—from down on the main river, I guess—but he's a smart man in a canoe."

The hotel-keeper left the room. The sun was down behind the hills and the dusk was deepening. A woman brought in a lighted lamp and placed it on Archer's table. He asked for another cup of coffee and lit a cigarette. The woman returned with the coffee and a green paper shade for the lamp. She placed the shade, saying: "I have noticed that you people

from the cities don't like a glare in your eyes. We got electric light now, wired over from the mill—but it's been out of order since Sunday. Malachi Davis is at the door and wants to know will he come right in ? "

" Yes, please. You are very kind," replied Archer.

Someone came to the table.

" Sit down and have a cigarette," said Archer.

Malachi sat down at the other side of the narrow table.

" I hope you have no objection to starting up river to-night," continued Archer. " We can bivouac if we come to bad water."

Malachi Davis did not answer. He was as mum as if he hadn't heard a word. Archer glanced across at him inquiringly, then moved the lamp a few inches to one side and tilted the shade so that the light touched the other's face.

" Shut up, Major ! It's me, right enough—but please don't yell about it," said the long youth. " Drink up your coffee and come for a walk, and I'll tell you all about it, sir."

" But what the devil ? And why Malachi Davis ? And your shirt ? You look like the village idiot, Peter," exclaimed Archer.

" Soft pedal with the Peter, please," whispered the other, glancing over his shoulder. " I'm not doing this entirely for fun, Major, nor on a bet. Drink up and come out. We can't talk here."

Archer obeyed. They walked beyond the mill and sat down on the bank of the river.

"And now, my young friend, please tell me what foolery you are perpetrating in this peaceful spot," said Archer. "But first of all, let me congratulate you on being alive, even if you have lost your name. I was without my memory for a while, but I never ceased to congratulate myself on being alive."

They shook hands heartily.

"I heard about the doing you got," said the long youth. "I was with the Stokes at the time. The last time I saw you, Major, was when I came back to the battalion with my commission, just before I went over to the Stokes outfit. Well, it all seems a long time ago—and here we are on the Tobique. And I wish I hadn't left the army, by thunder. I'd have had my third pip in another week. I came home early in the spring. I was a darned fool. I had a guardian, you know—I mean you don't know. Well, I had, anyway."

"I'll take your word for it, Peter. What about him?"

"He was a swine; and he is one still, as far as I know. I hope so, anyway. I am an orphan, and so is my sister, and the guardian is our uncle. Our old man left us quite a bunch of money and a couple of mills and a few miles of timber—all in Nova Scotia, where I belong. I left for the war when you did, which was a few months before I was of age. I am telling this like a war-diary without the weather reports, Major. I got three letters all in the same mail from my sister, one fateful day, telling me that our guardian was playing ducks and drakes with our money and our property and to come home "toot sweet." She is younger than I am; but I

thought she had more sense than I have, so I came. What she said was true, mind you—but even at the game he was playing he couldn't have cleaned us out inside another year. I caught him cold. He was cheeky; and he called me a liar; and he tore around cussing for a few minutes and at last pulled a pistol on me. I hit him before he could get into action; and he knocked his blasted head against the corner of the safe. On my way to Plaster Rock I saw Nancy for ten minutes. Malachi Davis is her idea, and so is this place as a retreat. I was up here with my old man ten years ago, fishing. Nancy has written to me twice. Our guardian is still having new backs fitted to his head and the police are still looking for me in the woods of home. I'll stick this life another week or two, and then I'll bust loose whether he is alive or dead. That's the story, Major. And now, as Malachi Davis, permit me to suggest that we start for our up-stream objective after an early breakfast in the morning instead of to-night."

"What will happen when your precious uncle recovers his health?" asked Archer.

"Nancy will jail him, quick as a wink. Her blood is up, and she has him surrounded on six sides."

"And if he doesn't recover?"

"That's the question. I am leaving it to Nancy. South America for young Malachi Davis, I think; and she would sell out and join me."

"Your sister seems to be a very capable and courageous young lady, Peter."

"You have said it, Major."

Archer returned to his hotel for the night and Malachi, so called, got everything ready for the early start and then went home to his little room at Widow Carson's. He was in bed before the thought occurred to him that he had forgotten to ask the Major where he was bound for.

CHAPTER XVIII

BOB SAYLE and Tom Snicken went six miles upstream and ran the canoe ashore. They gazed around them at rock and wood and water with the air of having seen these things before and often. They lit cigarettes.

"If we weren't so damn conscientious, sir, we'd lie down on our backs now and go to sleep," said Tom.

"You are right, Snick," agreed Bob.

"What would we do if we spotted the old joker?" continued Tom. "Suppose we lamped him this very minute, sir, on the other side of the stream, twenty yards away. What should we do about it? I don't know. We couldn't open fire on him with the rifle because we might hit him, and Mr. Reward has charged us very particularly not to hurt him. You would order an advance, sir, and we'd both move forward in the first wave and jump into the drink; and where do you suppose Master Poddington would be by the time we had won to yonder rock-bound

coast? I don't know the country well enough to guess at the answer. But what if we spotted him on this side of the stream?—up there in the bushes, for instance. What if we did? Nothing. He'd be hidden before we got to the top of the bank. We've got the bull by the wrong horn, sir. Hunting isn't the game to play with that old fox—nor trench-warfare nor open warfare. He has the whole bally world to dodge us in. The only way to get him is to trap him. If Noel Sabatis would let us use him for bait we'd soon have the humiliating relative where we want him."

"I believe you, Snick—but we must continue to do our duty as Jim Reward sees it. We are accustomed to having other people write our operation orders. It comforts Mr. Reward to know that we are scouting around harmlessly after his balmy papa. Now I am going to walk in two or three miles, just to see what I can find—perhaps the enemy's advanced headquarters or his footprints on the sands of time, or the address of the lunatic asylum he should be in—and you sit tight and guard the canoe. If he calls on you with hostile intentions, don't hit him with anything weighing more than one pound."

"Very good, sir. Are you taking the rifle with which you may not pot him even if you happen to pull the one chance in a billion of seeing him, or the rope to tie him up with if you find him asleep, or both?"

"I'll take the rope. A rope is one of those things you don't often need but you require more than anything

else you can think of when you do. And it doesn't weigh much."

"And the salt, sir, for his tail?"

Bob walked straight away for a mile, setting his course by the sun. His way led through a variety of country, but he saw nothing to suggest that any human being had ever been over the ground before him. Fires had been there and devastating gales of wind, consuming the soil to the rocky ribs of the world in places, in other places uprooting tall timber and laying it prone in gigantic winrows.

He came to the edge of a big swamp of varied greens, moved along into it to the right for a hundred yards or so and then struck straight into it. Alders and swamp-willows filled that place of stagnant air and stagnant water with billows of green foliage and tangles of brown stems. Coarse grasses of a pale yet vivid green stood knee-high in the closer tangles, and clumps of sappy weeds with yellow blooms grew waist high about the lips of black mud holes. Grey "rampikes" —the limbless and lifeless trunks of ancient pines that no wind had been strong enough to throw down—hardened and seasoned by fire and frost and rain—towered from the swampy green high and straight into the sunshine. Here and there gleamed a dark crowd of funereal cedars, and here and there a few slender poplars derided their desolate surroundings with the quick play of their heart-shaped leaves.

Bob Sayle did not like the swamp. Its air of silent,

brooding stagnation was not in tune with his mood. It seemed sinister to him—its green-screened pits of black, its choking, crowded growths that did not soar, its wide and pathless monotony. Its low tangles gave a tinge of unreality to the clean sunshine. Bob thought that this place might hide a man from the world for ever, even against his will. He wondered if old Pod Reward had moved his headquarters from the vicinity of the cave to some such joy-forsaken desolation as this. He did not think it was likely. He pictured the old man as sleeping every day in a different place, haunting the vicinity of the clearing every night, and visiting his hidden store of food now and then. Bob had seen with his own eyes (he had forced the terrified Noel to act as guide) that Pod had cleaned everything out of the retreat which he had shared with Noel up near the falls.

Bob explored a few acres of the swamp, but with no hope of finding any track or sign of the madman. Then he sat down at the foot of a rampike, lit a cigarette and let his whole mind turn to the joyous occupation of thinking about June de la Reward. If Pod had appeared during the smoking of that cigarette, Bob would very likely have asked him to go away. As he got to his feet he suddenly realized that he had been gazing fixedly for several minutes at a long, pale bloom which gleamed from the shade within two yards of him. It had caught his eyes before it had touched his consciousness. He stooped close and recognized it as a bloom of the wonderful plant with which old Jessie Sabatis had cured James Reward's fever and healed

the wound in his shoulder. He remembered its name—Gluskap's-hand—and the story she had told him of its origin and its magic qualities.

He found three of the plants there, growing close together. Two of them were in blossom. He pulled the two and thrust them into a pocket, roots and all. Then he made his way from the swamp and back the long mile to where he had left Tom and the canoe.

"Is that the old man hanging out of your pocket, sir?" asked Tom.

"That's old Jessie's big medicine," said Bob. "It is good magic, so I brought it along. I have been in a big swamp fifty madmen could hide for fifty years. Not a sign of Pod. He didn't call on you, I suppose."

Just what he did, sir. He turned up on the other side about an hour ago and remained fifteen minutes, the old blighter! He tried to scare me by making faces and yowling like a cat; and he succeeded, but I didn't tell him he had my wind up. Then he started in heaving stones at me; and I found out that he is better at that game than I am. He made two direct hits. That encouraged him so that he waded in, splashing like a fountain. Then I said to myself, "I'll try one more throw, and if that doesn't stop him I'll get busy with the rifle and shoot Mr. Reward's demented sire as full of holes as a Swiss cheese and have him securely buried before the Captain's return, and tell him that if he heard any shots I was shooting at a dicky bird. Yes, sir, my wind was up and my mind was made

up; but, fortunately for that old man, the next lump of rock I hove hit him fair in the stomach. He was washed down stream about twenty yards before he could scramble out—and I haven't seen him since."

"That's better," said Bob. "That may teach him a lesson. We have done enough for one day, don't you think so? I'll make a modified report of the incident to James Reward."

They embarked and drifted down with the swift current. The stream was so shallow, and the water so clear, that you could see every littlest bright pebble in the bed of it, and the darting minnows, and big trout lying with fanning gills in the amber shadows of stones.

They had drifted about three miles, with no more effort than an occasional guiding stroke of Bob's paddle, when a familiar voice called to them from the right bank. The nose of the canoe was run on to the dry pebbles quick as a wink and Bob jumped from the stern and waded ashore.

"Mr. MacLean is duller than usual to-day," said June, "so I left Miss Reward to listen to him. She hasn't heard all his stories, and I have—so that is fair enough. Every trout he caught reminded him of some poor, roaring lion he had shot."

"How did you come? Where is your canoe?" asked Bob.

"I walked."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone. But why do you ask? What is the matter, Bob?"

" Nothing—as you are here ; but it was a dangerous thing to do. The madman is active around this part of the river to-day. Tom saw him."

The colour came back slowly to Bob's face. Tom Snicken glanced at him and swiftly away. The girl looked at him with wide eyes and suddenly blushed deep. Her eyes brightened and softened magically.

" I am sorry," she said. " I didn't think. I was so anxious to find you two, and have a smoke, and get away from the mighty hunter, that I forgot all about the old man in the woods. But I promise—Tom, I promise you not to do it again."

" Very well, Miss de la Reward," replied Snicken gravely. " You hear what she has promised me, sir. She won't wander about in these woods again without an escort."

He jointed a rod and waded into the bright water, and Bob and the girl sat among ferns and watched him.

" That is a good man," she said.

" One of the best in the world," he replied.

They were silent for a minute, both staring down at the fisherman without seeing him.

" You went grey as paper," she said. " I thought you were ill."

" It was the thought of you walking three miles alone, with that old devil loose in the woods," he said, turning and looking at her. " Look at me, please ; and promise again—promise me what you promised Tom."

"I promise. What is that hanging out of your pocket."

"Gluskap's-hand. I found these two in a swamp this morning."

He told her all that he knew, and all that he had heard from Jessie Sabatis, about the magic plant.

"I brought them for you," he concluded.

"As medicine?" she asked.

"No, as magic," he answered. "They are pure magic—the last things created by Gluskap before his enemies got him down and placed a mountain on his breast. You are now the inheritor of much of his wisdom and keenness of eye. That god could see through curtains of caribou skin, and the bark walls of a lodge. He could read a man's heart through his flesh and ribs and the pictures in his brain as if his skull were blown of glass. These qualities, to a great or small degree according to the merit of your intentions, are now yours. I learned most of this from old Jessie and dreamed the rest. If you want to see through anything—a skull, or a caribou skin, or a sheet of bark—you simply hold Gluskap's-hand in yours and shut your eyes.

She took the sappy plants in her hands and closed her eyes for a few seconds. When she looked at Bob again she found him gazing at her with enchantment on his face.

"It is very potent magic," she said, "and I feel a profound respect for the magician who invented it—but what I want now is your advice, Bob. Gluskap was a god, I know—but you are a friend."

"You state my case mildly," he replied.

"Do you remember Archer Wallace, who was with you in Mr. MacLean's house the night the diamonds were lost?" she asked.

"Yes, very well. To think you were there, under that same roof! I have thought a great deal about that night since I learned that you were there, and I distinctly remember feeling a curious sensation——"

"But we are talking about Major Wallace now," she interrupted. "He is on his way to Fisher Creek. He may get here to-day. Miss Reward saw him at Plaster Rock yesterday, and he told her he was coming here to meet some people who don't expect him."

"He is a good fellow," said Bob. "He will help us chase old Pod around. I am glad he is coming here. Who are the people he wants to meet? Is he looking for MacLean and me?"

"He is a friend of Ian MacLean's—and also of Dad's and mine."

"Does he know you, June? Then that is why he is coming here. He has heard that you are here. Did you know him very well?"

"Yes, quite well; but when I last saw him he had forgotten that he knew me or had ever known me. That was in a London hospital. It is this that I want to tell you, Bob, and get your advice about. I am greatly worried—and I have come to you for help instead of going to Dad. He is so intent on his new book that he wouldn't know within ten minutes of my telling him

if my story were a true thing or a flight of his own imagination. I am afraid that Archer Wallace's memories of me have come back to him—or, if they haven't, that they will when he sees me here. Of course, he may never remember; but I'd be on pins and needles all the time he was here. But I don't want to run away."

"Run away? What sort of memories are these—that you are afraid of?"

"I am not afraid. I feel a fool, that is all. Please don't look like that. It is really all silliness—a ridiculous situation. We were very good friends. I think I liked him a little better than some of the other men I knew; and he thought that he was terribly fond of me. But if he had been, he wouldn't have forgotten me, don't you think so?"

"Not if his head had been knocked clean off," replied Bob in a stuffy voice, staring straight in front of him. "Not if he was dead."

"And he didn't remember me even when he saw me. But all his memories are sure to return to him some day."

"You want my advice about something. You must tell me what it is before I can advise you."

"She told him what she had told Ian MacLean in New York.

"You are engaged to him," said Bob, dully.

"But I am not, and I wasn't," she exclaimed. "Please don't be stupid and cruel, Bob. He thought I was because that cat wrote and told him so. I didn't tell anyone whom I was engaged to. I simply said that I

was engaged and let them think what they wanted to think. I have told you everything ; and now you must tell me what to do."

" You love him ? "

" No. Do you think I'd be here now if I did ? "

" But you did love him."

" I didn't. Never ! I liked him."

" You flirted with him."

" I did not. What do you mean by flirting ? "

" A thousand things. Perhaps you only looked at him the way—the way you looked at me."

" When ? "

" The first time. And the second time."

" How did I look at you, Bob ? You looked at me hard enough. I don't know what you mean. But what am I to do about Archer Wallace ? "

" Why do you ask me ? "

" Because I want you to know about Archer—and I want your advice. I didn't want you to hear anything about him from anyone else."

" Do you remember that first time I saw you, June ? "

" You looked at me hard enough to see me. You stared at me as if you were astonished at something. But I thought you had forgotten that—that accident."

" It wasn't an accident. I may forget it when I am dead—but I don't think so. I was afraid to speak of it before ! "

" Pardon me, sir, but I think we had better take Miss de la Reward back to camp now, before the others become

anxious about her and send out search parties," said Tom Snicken, confronting them.

"You are right," said Bob.

"But tell me what I shall do if Archer remembers," whispered the girl.

"Tell him the truth, just as you have told it to me—how it happened and everything," answered Bob. "He'll have to take it, poor devil! Tell him to forget it. There isn't any hope for him, is there?"

She answered that only with her eyes.

So they returned to camp; and Bob reported to James Reward that Tom had seen old Pod. He said that Pod had seemed to be in good health and spirits and still hostile. He did not mention Tom's lucky shot, or what the madman's fate would surely have been if Tom had missed that time. James felt decidedly bucked by the news.

"We'll get him yet," he said; "and when we do, if we find him hopelessly insane but still vigorous, we'll fence in a few acres for him—this shack and clearing—and hire a couple of fellows to camp outside the wire and look after him. Amos Dingle would be a good man for the job. He has common sense and a kind heart."

June found that Mr. MacLean had complained to John of her leaving him without a word to wander away up stream by herself. So John commenced a lecture on recklessness and thoughtlessness, and then lost the thread of his discourse and read her five pages of his *Family Descent*.

A canoe containing Major Archer Wallace and young Malachi Davis was run ashore on Pod Reward's front at six o'clock that evening. Alice was the first to see the canoe and welcome the Major. She paid no attention to the lanky guide; but he looked at her frequently and attentively while he unloaded the canoe and lifted it ashore.

"Now I know who you are and why you have come here," she said. "I have heard about you from your friend Mr. MacLean."

"MacLean? He doesn't know anything, my dear young lady," replied the Major. "Except enough to come to Fisher Creek. And perhaps he knows your name, and will tell it to me."

"I am Alice Reward," she said, watching him with frank and smiling curiosity. "Not Miss de la Reward. But June is here, too."

"Ian MacLean did not tell you that!" exclaimed Archer. "How should he know about it?" He turned in confusion to the long youth. "What are you up to, Peter? Malachi Davis I mean, what are you doing? Do you mean to make camp here before we get an invitation?"

"It's all one to me, Mister Major," drawled Malachi. "I ain't no ways particular; but the fewer wimmin 'round a camp the better I'm suited. You're boss. This here's your funeral."

Alice looked at him then; and Archer glared at him.

"Here comes the hull b'ilin' of 'em," continued Malachi.

" Maybe the Cap'n or Tom Snicken kin make up your mind for you, Mister Major."

Every member of the camp except June welcomed Archer. His tent was next to that of Bob and Tom. June did not appear at the evening meal; and her father said that she was suffering from headache. Archer wondered at that. Perhaps he had not yet remembered everything. And he wondered at Ian MacLean's manner which was curiously stiff, and at Bob Sayle's, which was curiously embarrassed and gentle. How was he to guess that the mighty hunter was jealous of him (for MacLean had reviewed the girl's story of the engagement with a grain of salt, since Archer's arrival) and that Sayle was very sorry for him ?

Darkness had closed down on the wilderness when Tom Snicken came to the fire at which Archer sat, and whispered in his ear. " Miss de la Reward wishes to speak to you, sir. Kindly follow me."

Tom led him down the bank and a few yards along the shore to the right. " Here she is, sir," he said, and vanished.

Archer could see only the pale mask of her face. She told him the truth, very simply and briefly.

" I was a fool to think it was so," he said. " I should have known better than to believe it—but I wanted to believe it. Well, all I can say is that I wish I hadn't remembered it."

" Did I behave as if I loved you ? " she asked gently.

" Never. You were a good pal. I was mad to believe

that letter," he answered. "But here I am, June; and I warn you that it may be more than an idle rumour next time."

CHAPTER XIX

CORNERING MALACHI

MALACHI DAVIS did not return to Plaster Rock next day. He made himself useful and agreeable about the camp a long time before and immediately after breakfast. He displayed a dry, rustic wit that caught the attention of the girls more than once. He talked to Archer Wallace and Tom Snicken in civilized English when others were not within earshot and to every one else in language that even old Pod would have considered uncultured and careless, had he heard it.

The breakfast dishes of granite-ware and tin were washed and left about to dry by eight o'clock, for there were no lie-abeds in that camp. Even James Reward was up and about bright and early this morning, fully recovered from his trip to Plaster Rock and following excitement, and full of plans for the rounding up of his wayward father.

Search parties and a guard for the camp were detailed without loss of time. Ian MacLean and Amos Dingle, who had both been on night duty, were told off to remain in camp with James Reward, Alice and June, and old Jessie Sabatis. Noel Sabatis was named for

duty with Bob Sayle and Tom Snicken, much against his will. This was at Tom's suggestion; and when Noel tried to fade away he was brought back by the collar of his shirt. The other patrol was made up of John de la Reward, Archer Wallace and the long youth Malachi Davis.

Bob's party went up stream and John's down, Bob armed with the rifle and John with the duck-gun. The weapons were not carried for use—for you can't shoot even a maniac much without hurting him—but to guard against the slightest possibility of their falling into the hands of Poddington. Both parties went on foot, leaving the canoes in the bushes with Amos on guard over them. Amos sat down among ferns and lit his pipe, Mr. MacLean retired to his tent and fell asleep, and James scouted gently about the fringe of the forest behind the clearing.

June had no intention of remaining in camp all day—but she did not say so to Alice. Alice had no intention of being dull, if she could possibly help herself—but she did not tell June about it. June made a reconnaissance of Amos Dingle's position and found the guide on his back with his hat over his eyes and his pipe gone out. The canoes lay in the bushes a few yards away from him on the down-stream side. June stood for a minute beside one of the canoes, looking at the unconscious Amos. She stooped and turned the light craft over without a sound; and still Amos did not stir. Then she gripped it by a gunnel, amidships, lifted it against her knees and staggered noiselessly away with it on a long slant toward the stream. Arrived at the water's edge, she lowered the canoe to the grass without a

sound and slid it into the current without an audible ripple. Her paddle lay ready to hand in the long grass. She wanted to go up stream rather than down ; but she dared not run the risk of crossing the guide's front. So she waded a few yards down with the canoe, then stepped aboard and drifted with the current.

June had promised both Bob Sayle and Tom Snicken not to venture alone into the woods while old Pod remained at large. Had she forgotten her promise ? No. She had gone to all this trouble of the canoe to keep it inviolate. Now she was on the water, not in the woods. The letter of her promise was being observed ; and as for the spirit of it, was she not reasonably safe in the canoe from Pod Reward ? A few strokes of the paddle would place her in mid-stream. If he threw stones at her she could dodge them ; and if he tried to come aboard she would smash him with the paddle.

She took up her paddle and stroked a cautious stroke ; and at the same time a low voice spoke to her from the bushes.

" Let me come too," said the voice, scarcely above a whisper.

June glanced aside and saw Alice Reward. She smiled and swung the boat shoreward. Alice stepped lightly in and away they went.

" You did that very cleverly," said Alice. " I was watching you all the time, like a lynx ; and if you had refused to take me in I would have screamed for Amos—like a cat. But it required more than cleverness to handle the canoe as you did. You are very strong for your size."

"I think I am as big as you are," returned June. And then, "I am sorry I couldn't go up instead of down. The water is swifter up river, and I want to practice poling."

"But we may find the Major in this direction," said Alice. "How strange it is that you and the Major were friends, and Bob Sayle and I knew each other long ago, and we should all come to Fisher Creek at the same time by accident."

"Yes, it is queer—but I am not frightfully interested in Major Wallace. Are you?"

"I scarcely know him. I admire him, of course—for his courage. I think your father is the most interesting man in the party; and next to him, Malachi Davis."

"Why Malachi? I haven't noticed anything particularly interesting about him except the fact that he has been a soldier."

Alice smiled. "Do you really see nothing more than that? Do you really believe that he is what he pretends to be," she asked.

"Really, I see nothing more. I believe him to be a young countryman working on this river as a guide. He seems capable and good-natured. What more is there to see? Yes, he has fine eyes."

"I haven't noticed his eyes; but when I was passing Major Wallace's tent this morning I heard Malachi say! "Buck up, old top, the world is full of them." And the Major said, "Don't be an ass," and Malachi laughed—and that is all I heard. But he didn't talk as he usually does—and he sounded friendly rather than respectful."

"Now that I think of it, his bushwhacker talk seems

rather overdone. I wonder what they are that he thinks the world is full of ? "

" I have a suspicion that he referred to women. He was evidently trying to comfort Major Wallace, who sounded in a temper."

June looked straight ahead and plied the paddle in silence, and Alice regarded her with smiling eyes. Neither spoke for several minutes. It was Alice who broke the silence.

" You are the prettiest girl I know," she said suddenly. " And I believe you are as dear as you look ; and we are cousins, of sorts, if you will acknowledge my grandfather—so let's be friends."

" You are very good," replied June, blushing. " You are very generous—and I hope very much we shall be friends; but friendship is a big thing to decide on so quickly. You may not like me when you know me."

" You mean that we may disagree about something important and want to fight. That is possible, of course—but not at all likely, I think. I hope we shall be friends, anyway."

" So do I. That is the soundest beginning of friendship. There is our mysterious Malachi Davis, fishing. He seems to be alone."

Malachi was seated on a cedar root that overhung the stream, casting languidly with a light rod. His wide hat of black felt was tipped over his eyes, and from beneath its brim protruded a cigarette in a long tube. He did not see the canoe until it was within ten yards of him. Then he made a grab at his hat with the very evident intention of lifting it, changed his mind as

suddenly and evidently, fumbled the offending headgear and finally lost hold of it. It fell to the stream like a wounded crow and floated off. The canoe shot after it and Alice took it in. Then June turned shoreward and ran the canoe into the bank.

"Where are the others?" she asked the young man.

"I lost 'em, marm," he replied, "so I cal'lated as how the best thing to do would be to set still till they come back."

"Why do you talk like that? Do you think it clever?" asked Alice.

"I ain't clever, Miss Reward. No never was, nor never had much schoolin'," he answered, with voice and air of deep humility. And after a brief pause he added, yet more humbly, "I'd hev' called t'other gal by her name too, but I forgot the chune it's sung to."

"Now you are cheeky," exclaimed Alice, laughing. "That is cheek, even if you are as ignorant and dull as you pretend to be. But you are not. You are a fraud! We see through your game, Miss de la Reward and I. You can speak quite as correctly as any of us, so please don't continue to put yourself to the trouble of murdering the poor old language—unless it amuses you very much indeed."

From his perch on the root the young man regarded her with a new expression in his eyes. They were clear eyes. He looked from her to June.

"It doesn't amuse me very much," he said, gravely. "It is beastly fag most of the time; and I'm afraid I have been overdoing it a little during the last few days. How did you spot me for a fraud?"

"For one thing, I overheard you talking to Major

Wallace this morning as I passed your tent," replied Alice.

" Ah ! that," he said, thoughtfully. " I wonder how much you heard. I shall be more careful in future. Thank heaven it was you who heard me ; for I feel sure that you two won't let me down. It is very important that the people on this river should not even suspect what you know. They must continue to think me the harmless jay I look and sound. Major Wallace knows and agrees with me. I told him all about it when we met at Plaster Rock."

" Did you know Major Wallace before you met him at Plaster Rock ? " asked Alice.

" Yes, I knew him very well."

" Is it a disgraceful thing—your reason for all this ? " asked June. " A shameful thing ? You know what I mean."

" I know what you mean, and I thank you for putting it that way," he returned, smiling. " You give me credit for discrimination and honesty, bless you ! So I hasten to assure you that you need not hesitate about being as nice to me as you can and as my assumed character permits. I am not in disgrace, but in danger."

When Amos Dingle pushed his hat back from his face and saw that one of the canoes was gone from its bed in the bushes, his first thought was of Pod Reward. He got to his feet, picked up and pocketed his cold pipe and went down to the edge of the water. He stared up stream and down stream. Seeing nothing but wood and water and sunshine, a pair of brown sandpipers flying and a burnished kingfisher on a dead branch, he swore mildly and turned and ascended the bank to the

row of tents. He looked into each tent in turn and was rewarded only by a sight of Mr. MacLean prone on his broad back with his mouth open. He went to the shack and found old Jessie seated on the ground in a corner, wrapped in her deep, wide-eyed reveries. He gazed around the clearing and beheld James Reward digging with a spade at the foot of a big stump. He walked over to James, who was far too intent on his unusual occupation to see him until he spoke.

" Are you diggin' worms for bait ? " asked Amos.

James jumped like a hare, then laughed with relief.

" Lord ! You gave me a start, Amos ! " he exclaimed. " I thought it was my frisky dad after me. Worms for bait ? No, I have been looking for whatever it was my father was burying here that night I called on him and got hurt. Whatever it was, it is gone."

" So's one of the canoes," said Amos.

" What ? " cried James.

" So's one of the canoes," repeated the guide. " And the young ladies, too," he added.

The millionaire flung down his spade with an oath.

" Do you mean to tell me that old devil has carried off the girls in a canoe ? " he cried. " Is that what you mean ?—standing there like a damn idiot ! "

" I guess not," returned Amos, with unruffled dignity. " Only a fool would think that. My first idea was that Pod had sneaked the canoe ; but now that I can't find hair nor feather of the young ladies 'round anywheres I figger that it was them took the canoe."

"I bet you are right," said James. "I bet it was that English girl's idea. Alice wouldn't dream of doing such a thing without asking my permission. You go down stream and I'll go up; and if you find them, bring them straight home.

It was Amos who found them. They were still talking to young Malachi Davis. He got into the canoe and brought them home.

CHAPTER XX

FATHER AND SON

DOWN stream, that day, there was drama; and up stream there was action. The dramatic situation down stream held a seed of romance; but up, where the waters ran swifter and shallower and men worked undistracted, the action was sheer physical adventure and melodrama.

When Bob Sayle and Tom Snicken reached the point where the fugitive madman had been encountered the day before, they posted Noel Sabatis where Tom had been stationed yesterday and crossed the stream and hid in the bushes on the other side. Noel was to hold his ground, for with assistance so close at hand he was in no degree of danger. He was to hold it, anyway, for Tom said so; and Tom had the rifle. The hunters hoped that Pod would repeat his performance of yesterday; in which case, while Pod hurled stones across the stream at Noel the decoy, they would arise from ambush and take him in the rear. Tom had heard somewhere (so

he said) that a mad person always tries the same thing twice, at least ; so he maintained that their chances of success on this occasion were very good. Bob liked the plan well enough. Only Noel Sabatis thought it rotten ; but he did not doubt for a moment that it would produce the madman.

The schemers had not long to wait.

Pod made his appearance suddenly and violently—but on that side of the stream where he was neither expected nor wanted. With an inhuman yell, he hurled himself down the steep and bushy bank in rear of Noel Sabatis.

Noel did not tarry even for long enough to glance over his shoulder. He took a flying leap, and yelled while flying. His first jump landed him in six inches of water. He jumped again without a moment's delay—and again—and again. His fourth jump splashed him in mid-stream. The swift and merry water rolled him over and under and stranded him on a mossy boulder like a wounded salmon.

Then Bob and Tom, ambushed on the wrong side of the stream, threw off the paralysis of astonishment that froze them and dashed to the rescue. Pod greeted their appearance with a shower of stones of various shapes and sizes. One unit of that shower—fortunately a round one of moderate size—hit Tom Snicken above the right eye. Another caught Bob on the shin ; and yet another, almost as large as a loaf of bread, smote Noel Sabatis on the ribs where he lay sprawled and exposed on the mossy boulder in mid-stream.

Bob waded out and brought Noel ashore and then bathed Tom's unconscious head until he opened his eyes.

"What price peace by Christmas?" murmured Tom.

Pod did not attempt to cross the stream. Delighted with his quick victory, he scrambled to the top of the bank and ducked into the woods. He turned to his left almost immediately and travelled fast. Every now and then he halted for a moment and gave ear to the wind, and the soft whisper of the stream in the deep bed, listening for something else. After he had covered a couple of miles, he slackened his speed and went more cautiously. Twice he stole out to the edge of the thicket at the top of the bank and peered down at the empty river. Now and then he sat down and laughed heartily, but without a sound.

To tell the truth, Pod was having the best time of his life. Never before, in all his years of freedom, had he felt so free as now. He had never been mad enough in the past to fully enjoy himself. Now he was free to throw stones at everyone he saw, and to scare people half out of their wits, and to kill that fool Noel Sabatis whenever it suited his whim. He felt as well in body as he had in the heyday of his youth, and much better in mind and spirits. He could think quick as lightning, and of the most astonishing and entertaining things. He could make pictures inside his head of things he had never so much as suspected before.

When he laughed silently, it was at his thoughts of

his son James. He knew that James wanted to catch him and take him to New York and shut him up all alone in a house as big as Dan Whalen's store. And the joke was that James had no more chance of catching him than he had of catching a fish-hawk, for he could fly as well as any fish-hawk. Yes, he could fly! That was one of the things he had learnt to do in the last few days. Sometimes he laughed at the thought of Ian MacLean. Oh, yes, he knew who that big fellow was and why he had come to Fisher Creek. He was the boss of all game-wardens and special constables, and he was looking for old Pod Reward. He would look a pretty fool, wouldn't he, when Pod flew right away from under his nose some day.

Pod knew everyone in camp by sight and believed that they had all come to assist in his capture; but he no longer felt angry with them for appropriating his shack and clearing. He no longer entertained the wish to frighten them away from Fisher Creek. He intended to scare them at every opportunity, and eventually to kill a few of them; but he would have felt greatly aggrieved if they had broken camp and gone away. He found them very entertaining—and there was food to be had for the taking when his own supply of provisions was exhausted. He had already reinforced his dwindling stock of tea and bacon. The guards who patrolled the camp at night were jokes to him. But there was one member of the party whom he never took liberties with (beyond the little matter of attempting to burn her alive in the shack) and

of whom he was afraid; and that was old Jessie Sabatis. He had been afraid of her—and now, in his madness, he saw formidable qualities in her that he had not suspected in his dull days of sanity. Strange to say, he had completely forgotten the incident of setting fire to the cabin.

Pod was within a mile of the camp when he heard something coming. It was something big and soft-shod—either a bear or a man. He continued to advance through the brush, slowly and with no more noise than a shadow. He soon saw that it was a man—more, that it was his big son James. He had lost his fear of James.

Pod appeared suddenly before his son and uttered a terrific yell. James gurgled and turned and ran. He was in full flight, with the old man in full cry at his heels, before he had time to formulate a reasonable thought. And then it was too late to think, reasonably or otherwise. Terror had him by the heart like fingers of ice, and by the nape of the neck like an icy wind; and his legs would have refused to stop working if they had been confronted by all the best thought in the world. Panic had him by the heels.

James took everything in his stride that happened to stand or lie along his direct line of flight—young spruces, bushes, clumps of fern, tangles of alders and the trunks of fallen trees. To Pod, who followed hard and got switched by many harsh branches, he seemed to fly. This surprised Pod. He hadn't suspected his son of being able to do it. So he flew, too. He flew like a fish-hawk; and still he

got the switchings of the other's flight. So he flew like a crow; and even that wasn't fast enough. James was flying like a duck—so Pod did the same. (Madness has its compensations, evidently). But even a duck couldn't overtake James, so the old man lit—rather heavily for a bird—on a mound of moss, and gave up the pursuit.

James kept going at full speed for several hundreds of yards after Pod had given up the chase. Then he reduced to half speed; and by the time he reached the clearing his rate of movement was scarcely perceptible. He lay flat on his face for fully fifteen minutes before he was able to explain his condition to those who stood anxiously around him asking questions and pouring water on him.

James had not a great deal to say of his experience. He informed them that he had met his father unexpectedly; and when questioned by Alice, he admitted that he had not tried very hard to effect a capture, for fear of hurting the old man. Then he retired to his bunk in the shack and was dosed with several varieties of herb-tea by old Jessie.

When Bob and Tom appeared, supporting Noel Sabatis between them—Bob limping and Tom with a blue bump over one eye—Mr. MacLean said that in his opinion Fisher Creek was not a safe or fit place for young ladies.

Everybody remained in the camp for the remainder of the day; and after sundown John de la Reward, Archer Wallace and Malachi Davis went on guard. They were to be relieved at one o'clock in the morning by Amos, Bob and Ian MacLean. Tom

Snicken was excused from duty because of his head.

The night passed without accident. Malachi Davis set out for Plaster Rock the first thing in the morning, with Archer Wallace's canoe and permission, for provisions and mail. He made the down-trip in record time, embarking in the twilight before sunrise, when the desolated whip-poor-wills were at their loudest, and arriving at the village in time for a second breakfast.

Widow Carson delighted in serving food to her lanky boarder and watching him eat it. At sight of him she put another stick into the kitchen stove. For him she turned her lightest pancakes and poured her clearest and strongest coffee. So, having once shown himself he might as well have tried to jump across the mouth of Tobique as to avoid a second breakfast. She sat him down in the kitchen, at a table with a red-bordered cloth on it within arm's reach of the stove, brisked up fire and put on the griddle.

"You ain't plumpin' up none, Malachi," she said. "This here runnin' 'round with the sports ain't doin' you no good. I don't no more'n get a pound or two of extree flesh on to yer ribs than away you go up river an' lose it all. An' they learn you to smoke cigarettes, too, which ain't no ways fattenin'. Yer still at the growin' age, Malachi, an' what you need is regular meals four or five times a day an' jist enough work for to keep you supple. Why don't you get a job at time keepin' in the mill?"

"No m'am," said Malachi. He paused reflectively, wondering if he should have said m'am or marm. "I wanter be a guide," he continued. "I gotter larn the river. There's big money in guidin'."

She passed the pancakes hot from the griddle to his plate. He did his best, which was astonishingly good; but to make her desist from continuing the process of frying and passing all day, he was forced to move his plate out of her reach.

He went to Dan Whalen's and asked if there were any letters for himself, Malachi Davis. There were not.

"D'ye know anything about where this here Ian MacLean, Esquire, has got himself to?" asked Dan, considering two bulky envelopes bearing New York post-marks."

"He ain't far from where my boss is camped," replied Malachi.

"Then ye kin take these up to him, an' tell him I sent 'em, an' sign this here receipt," said Whalen.

Malachi signed the receipt, made his purchases, returned misleading answers to dozens of questions about MacLean's party and Archer Wallace's doings, and took his departure.

"He's a well-meanin' cuss, that young Malachi," said Dan to a customer for shingle-nails, "an' steady as a scow—but there ain't no more git-up-an-git to him than to that there box of biscuits yer settin' on. He won't never make a fust-rate guide, for all he's smart on the river, because he won't never larn to make the most of his opportunities."

"Maybe yer right, Dan," returned the customer, "but he's got a shine to his eye now and agin that looks like to me as if yer wrong."

CHAPTER XXI

JAMES MAKES A FOOL PLAY

JAMES REWARD awoke that morning in a low mood and in physical discomfort. He ached all over from his unaccustomed exertions of the day before. The problem of his father's future weighed on his mind. He had never felt so little hope of solving it as now. Perhaps the best thing to do would be to leave the old man to his weird and violent devices; but could he conscientiously do that? Pod was his father! a bad one, but still his father; and he felt an uneasy suspicion that his own unexpected arrival on Fisher Creek had been the final straw that had broken the back of the old man's sanity. Should he leave the madman to yell and throw stones at his own wild whim, how long would it be before someone shot him, or the authorities captured him, or he committed murder or suicide.

It seemed to James that the first thing to do toward solving the problem was to reduce the population of the camp. It seemed to him (in the mood that ha him) that there were enough people on Fisher Creek who didn't

belong there to drive even a sane person mad. What the devil had inspired John de la Reward to come nosing up into this wilderness ? Oh, he knew—curiosity concerning his family ; but what sort of reason was that for a grown man ? Even so, why had he brought June and the big dub Ian MacLean ? He didn't want this particular chapter of his family history aired before Ian or any other MacLean. This particular piece of the wood was private property, he should like people to know ! Private property, to the extent of two or three hundred acres, he'd have them understand ! And as if de la Rewards and a MacLean were not enough, here was this Major ! And what had brought him ? This June de la Reward ! James wished that the Major would grab June and run away with her, and that all the rest of them —except Alice and Bob Sayle—would give chase and keep right on going.

The fact is, James felt more worried about his daughter than about his father. He had planned a fine thing ; and here it was going to pieces under his very nose. He had gone about it the right way—but what was the use ? Bob Sayle was behaving like a darned young fool !

He felt slightly better in mind and body and temper after breakfast. But he kept to his bunk and held firm to his intention of starting something before much longer. The whole situation was crazy—as crazy as Pod. It had to be broken up, somehow or other.

Alice and June came in hand in hand to see James just after he had lighted his first cigar.

"I bet fifty dollars there are no two other such eye-dazzlers going hand-in-hand, or within a mile of each

other, in any quarter of the globe this morning," he said.

The girls thanked him, and Alice kissed him. He continued to look intently and admiringly from one to the other.

"You don't show a drop of Reward," he said to Alice; "not a flaw or a smudge of that blood. You look like your mother. You're lucky, kid. And I don't see any of it in you, June—but, of course, your strain of the breed escaped the mixture that we ran into a couple of generations ago in this cursed nook of the woods."

"But you know I am not a Reward," said June. "I should be very proud to be dad's daughter in blood as well as in heart—but I am only his by adoption and devotion. I am sure I should look just as—not any worse than I do—if dad were really my father."

"I had forgotten that," returned James.

"He gazed at her inquiringly.

"I am Witchery by birth," she said, her cheeks paling slightly and her eyes darkening.

"I had not heard," replied James, in a more gentle and considering voice. "It seems to me a very appropriate name, my dear."

"Witchery," cried Alice. "I love it. June Witchery!"

"Please don't say it—or speak of it," said June quietly and somewhat unsteadily, turning to her and touching her hand. "Dad does not like it—does not like to hear it—to be reminded of the truth that I am not a de la Reward. Other people do not know who I am—by birth."

Alice kissed her. "It is a family secret," she said. "So we must not tell anyone that there is Witchery in the family," she continued, turning to James.

"No need of telling it," answered James, with a smile that was not of unmixed delight. "Witchery and madness! You two setting the camp by the ears with your—well, your remarkable eyes and your extraordinary noses and your unusual chins—and old Pod raising hell with us from the outside with his war-whoops and chunks of rock! I don't see how we are to keep the light of this family under a bushel."

A few minutes later, when Alice was trying to worm and wrest a Maliseet legend out of old Jessie Sabatis, James said very quietly to June, "Will you come back as soon as you can, alone, and talk to me?"

June returned to the shack, alone, half-an-hour later, and at James' request sat down on the up-ended biscuit box outside his bunk.

"It is very good of you to come," he said. "I want your advice about something—something very important."

He spoke heartily and looked at her straightly, but much of his usual assurance of manner and tone of voice was lacking.

"I hope I can help you," replied the girl, calmly. "I shall do my best."

"What am I to do about Bob Sayle?" he asked, staring at her.

Her glance did not waver from his, but curious and beautiful changes took place in the depths of her eyes.

He did not see her slender hands clasp and whiten in her lap.

"What do you wish to do about him? And why should you do anything?" she asked in return.

In reply, he told her briefly a great deal of what he knew of Bob's career to date, a great deal about Bob's father, and almost everything about the late Robert N. Sayle's extraordinary will. The only thing he left about the will, so far as it concerned Bob, was the name of the person who was to benefit to the tune of millions by Bob's disinheritance.

"His father planned a certain thing for him, but he bungled it," continued James. "He didn't understand Bob. The will is the result of that bungled plan. I think I know Bob fairly well, and I have his interests at heart; so I have kept the secret of that peculiar clause of the will from the knowledge of both parties concerned. By so doing, I have strained my powers as executor considerably. After mature reflection, I have decided that the late Mr. Sayle's plan is now a wise and right thing, whatever it may have been at the time of his first making it or even a year ago. He has made it right by the peculiar clause in his will. The money is rightfully Bob's; it can very easily be his; and what I want to know is, how am I going to lead him to it?"

"Why not tell him what you have told me?" asked the girl.

"I have—most of it, at least. And I am sure he suspects the rest. But he is hurt at his father's misunderstanding and does not seem to take the slightest interest in the fact that he is out several millions of dollars."

"Then why not tell him everything? How he can recover his lost inheritance—everything?—and let him judge for himself?"

"Judge! He wouldn't use any judgment. He would go up in the air higher than Gilroy's kite. He would—oh, confound it all, he would smash everything, himself included. Haven't I thought of that a thousand times! You don't understand!"

"I think I do. Bob is to recover, by marriage, the huge sum of money which he has lost through the injustice and stupidity of others. Is that it? And I believe that you are trying to intimate to me that I am upsetting your plan in some way—your plan for Bob's return to wealth. Is that so?"

"Yes. I am sorry—but that is the truth and the situation exactly. He is—he seems to be infatuated by you."

"Do you really think so? And are you quite sure that infatuated is exactly the right word to use? You should like me out of the way, so that the person who has Bob's millions may make an arrangement by which he shall benefit to a certain extent and she shall not lose very much? That is business, I suppose; but I can think of other names for it. And I can think of other and simpler ways of reinheriting Captain Sayle. Why not use your influence with the fortunate person who has his millions to persuade her to give them back to him?"

"He wouldn't take them!"

"And yet you expect him to take them with a wife attached?"

" Yes—if he had half a chance."

" If I were to go away from here to-morrow, how long do you think it would be before he followed me ? "

" If he didn't know where you had gone, why should he follow ? "

" But he would know. He would know that he could find me at home in London sooner or later. Do you expect me to desert Dad and all my friends simply to oblige you ? I did not follow him to Fisher Creek—but he followed me."

" I don't believe it."

" Then I am afraid I can't help you ; but I'll give you a little sound advice. Learn politeness and honesty, if it is possible to do so at your age, and mind your own business ; and—and——"

June stood up and covered her face with her hands. She turned blindly and stumbled from the shack. James called her name after her, but she did not pause or look back.

" I am a fool ! " he exclaimed. " Now I've done it ! A fool and a beast ! "

" Yes," said old Jessie Sabatis, appearing suddenly at his elbow. " Yes, Jim Reward, you bigger fool nor Pod. You don't see with the eye nor with the heart. That girl no more pretty nor Alice, maybe—but she got the spark in her that a man throw away all the world for—and you don't see. That girl got the heart of big magic, like what Gluskap sell his life for long time ago—and you don't see. You got money maybe fill one canoe—but you got the blind eye."

"I believe you, Jessie; but as I had not the early advantages of Gluskap and Bob Sayle, you must try to excuse me," replied James.

The old squaw scowled at him and left the shack.

Nothing was heard of Pod Reward that day. Malachi Davis got back to camp soon after sunset and handed over the mail to Mr. MacLean. When the mighty hunter opened the big envelope he found their contents to consist almost entirely of letters for John, all re-addressed to New York from one or another of his London clubs. John retired to his tent with his letters, accompanied by June. June had kept very close to him since her morning talk with James. Now she sat on his rolled blankets and opened his letters, passing them up to him one by one. Every now and then she glanced up to see how he was receiving the intelligence thus conveyed to him.

"Why are you looking so pleased, dad?" she asked. "Has someone written to say that he has read one of your books and thinks he knows what you mean?"

"That is the idea, more or less," replied John, "and that discerning reader is, officially at least, the King—God-bless-'im. No. I am wrong. It is not for my literary attainments that he wishes to knight me, after all, but for that simple little bomb I invented. After all my amazing and constructive inventions, now they go and attach golden spurs to me for inventing that destructive little bomb, the "Essex Plum." I am not nearly as pleased as I look, dear."

"The Essex Plum!" cried the girl, springing to her feet. "It may not be as clever as your books, dad, but it did more to win the war! I am proud enough of you to cry. You never told me that it was a success. Cheer up, dad, and let me kiss you. And now I am the only person who has ever kissed Sir John de la Reward."

CHAPTER XXII

THE DISCOMFITURE OF THE MIGHTY HUNTER

EVERYONE in camp, with the exception of Jessie Sabatis and her son with the sore ribs, congratulated Sir John heartily. The military men—Wallace, Bob, Tom, Malachi and Amos Dingle—were greatly impressed by the fact that this polite and philosophical man who spent almost all his waking hours in clothing profound, startling and even mad ideas in sentences which sometimes rolled like a long surf and as often spattered like a machine-gun, had laid aside his peaceful and abstract labour and applied his fine brain and great power of concentration to such a practical and demolishing creation as the "Essex Plum." Amos aptly expressed the feelings of all when he said, "It sure do beat hell!"

"Perhaps Mr. Stokes and Mr. Mills and Messrs. Lee and Enfield will be dropping in to tea with us some evening soon," suggested Tom.

Ian MacLean and James Reward thought more than they said about it. The mighty hunter remembered calling John impractical—too impractical to bring up a daughter without a bachelor's assistance—and felt

an uneasy curiosity as to what John really thought of him. James considered his new-found cousin from a new point of view. He had known him to be clever and distinguished ; but now he knew him to be successful even by his standards of the world which he knew so well. Many things are to be said for and against modern knighthood ; but one thing is certain—that no man is knighted for worldly failure. James regretted more than ever the frankness of his talk to June ; and after a night's sleep he decided to postpone his intended frank talk to John.

MacLean lay awake a long time and wondered if he might have been knighted as a mighty hunter if he had happened to be a British subject. He could not quite bring himself to believe so. He awoke next morning with a little spark of reckless daring aglow in him and the profound thought—inspired by his friend's elevation —that success was not to be had in any sphere of endeavour without effort. This fine thought remained with him, and the little spark continued to glow in him, hour after hour until mid-afternoon. The thought escaped him unnoticed and the spark was quenched, at exactly four o'clock by the sun.

At four o'clock, Mr. Ian MacLean told June de la Reward that he felt convinced of the fact that he would make her an admirable and generous husband and that she would make him a charming and suitable wife. But I have no intention of describing the interview. June was very kind about it—that is to say, she did not laugh and she expressed her regret that she could not agree with him in the politest terms.

Mr. MacLean's first emotion was of astonishment, for this was the first time that his hand had been rejected by any woman—as it was the first time that he had offered it. He honestly believed himself to be the stuff, along with his wealth, of which first-rate husbands are made. He didn't believe in romance, or any rot of that sort. Grief and joy had been alike unknown to him all his years. Satisfaction and displeasure were as far as he had ever felt with life either way. Now he felt astonishment; but this turned almost immediately to displeasure.

MacLean went to his tent and found the new knight busily writing as if nothing had happened to him. The mighty hunter packed his brushes and shaving-kit and rolled his blankets; and though the writer glanced vaguely up from his note-book several times he did not speak. No one could see less with the outward eyes than Sir John when he felt that way. The other shouldered his personal possessions.

"Good-bye, John," he said.

"Good-bye, Mac," replied the knight.

"You can send down to Plaster Rock for the canoe."

"Certainly. Whatever you say."

"Well, I'm off."

"Good luck!"

The mighty hunter took his departure. Nobody noticed him pass from the tent to the top of the bank. He stowed his blankets in a canoe unobserved; and Malachi Davis, who saw him tug the canoe down to the water, supposed that he was going fishing. So he paddled away, and no one bade him remain. But he

did not paddle far just then. He went ashore half a mile below the camp and sat down to smoke and think and it was now, for the first time in his life, that he honestly tried to see himself as others might possibly see him. So he did two things for the first time in sixty years that day. No doubt the effort of the one inspired him to the other. He looked at himself for a reason of June's rejection of his hand ; and he saw something of the truth, though not clearly. He didn't like it. Then he looked at himself for an explanation of the fact that, of all the dozens of men he had dined and wined and gone hunting with, not one of them was his particular friend. Even the men who knew that he liked and admired them, did not turn to him in their big moments or in their times of doubt and distress. They all had closer friends. And yet he was liberal enough with his money. What was the matter ? and was the matter with himself or with others ? He did not know ; he could not see clearly ; but he had a most depressing suspicion that the trouble lay all in himself—that he was a failure in some queer things that evidently stood for more than money and respectability with some people—that he had been a conceited ass for sixty years. Could it be so ? No, no ! The trouble was that his liver was out of order.

He gave it up at last, and by that time the sun was near the hill tops. He embarked and paddled irresolutely down stream. When he had gone a distance of three easy miles from the place of his self-examination he suddenly sat up straight and exclaimed " damn " in a hearty voice. Then he swung the canoe around and headed her up stream.

"I'll not behave like a spoilt and sulky child," said he. "I'll go back and tell June that she is right—for the chances are even that she is. And I'll show them all that they are mistaken in their mean opinion of me. By heaven! I do believe that even Amos Dingle thinks I am a joke."

By this time the river was dark between its high wooded banks. It ran deep and slow. MacLean paddled strongly, anxious to get back to camp before Amos should notice the absence of his blankets and question John de la Reward. But despite this local anxiety, he felt an unusual and pleasant lightness of heart—a thing more active and buoyant than mere complacency.

He stroked deep and strong—but presently he felt that all was not right with the canoe. It seemed to drag by the head—and it trembled. Then he remembered about the bear, or whatever it was, that had taken hold of Jim Reward's canoe. A nasty chill ran from his forehead clean back and over to a point between his shoulder-blades. He gave a mighty stroke and the canoe shook and rolled. With another great stroke he swung its heavy head nearer shore. And then he became aware of the fact she ran more easily—and in the same flash of the mind he knew that he had a passenger. His throat went dry. A passenger! Something in the canoe with him, hidden from him by the dark. Was it a bear? Or what was it? He said, "Who are you?" in an absurdly small, cracked voice. He did not get an answer. Perhaps the thing was even now crawling toward him. He dug deep once more with the paddle, then lifted it from the water

and plunged the broad blade straight before him with all the strength of his arms.

It struck something alive—something that flinched away from it and, next moment, took hold of it and held it tight. Panic seized Ian MacLean. He wrenched at the paddle violently and yelled at the top of his lungs—and then the canoe turned over and down he went in the black water. He clawed his way up to the surface desperately, with the horror of unseen things at his heels. He blew the water from his mouth and nose and stroked for the shore. One hand struck the floating paddle, and he instantly laid hold of it. He stood up with his feet deep in the mud of the river-bed and the water to waist, and staggered heavily forward, using the paddle as a staff. He was almost out—the water was no more than to his hips and the footing was firmer —when a pair of arms gripped him about the middle and muscular legs entwined his shins. Down he went again, face first, with another yell—but this time the yell was not entirely of terror. He was fighting mad.

He fought. Now in the air, now beneath the surface of the roiled water, he fought furiously, blindly, with terrific energy. He knew by this time that he was engaged in a life and death struggle with a madman. He felt his antagonist's face and hands, and its fingers on his windpipe. He wrenched it clear of him and flung it aside—but in another second it had him by the knees. Now it was on his shoulders, and he was under water with his mouth in the mud. But he staggered up and pulled it around from his neck and stumbled forward on top of it . . . He lost it for a little while

It suddenly clawed his face, feeling for his eyes . . . He flung it from his chest and it had him by the ankles. . . . He struck it with his fist. . . . At last it was gone. He could not find it anywhere. He crawled painfully and heavily ashore on his hands and knees and lay down.

There he was found by Alice Reward and Malachi Davis. It was strange that they should have happened to be on the river together—but so it was. And they had heard his first scream of terror and his second yell of rage, and had paddled hard to the rescue. He lay unconscious when they found him, torn and bleeding, with a fragment of old grey flannel gripped in his right hand. He opened his eyes and looked at them while they were trying to lift him.

"I nearly had him that time," he said.

They paddled to within fifty yards of the clearing, and there Alice got out of the canoe.

"Promise not to mention me, please," she whispered to MacLean. "I was not supposed to be out of camp, you know."

"I promise, word of honour," said the mighty hunter.

Malachi left MacLean in the hands of the whole party, including Alice, and with Amos Dingle started down stream again on the trail of the escaped canoe.

Ian MacLean's body and limbs were found to be covered with bruises, his throat was black and blue; his face was torn and discoloured and his arms were cut sharply in several places. A knife had been used, but had evidently been lost early in the struggle. He told

the men of the fight while they looked him over and washed him. His story went through the camp in a twinkling and created surprise and a favourable impression; but he was criticized for having ventured on so dangerous an expedition alone. He was carried to the shack and placed in James Reward's bunk and the hands of old Jessie Sabatis.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STORM

NO one of Mr. MacLean's injuries was of a serious character. Soon after Jessie Sabatis had treated his face and the cuts on his arms with her lotions, and made him swallow a mug full of one of the most soothing of her wild brews, he sank peacefully to sleep.

A few miles away, Pod Reward did not find himself so comfortably situated as his recent opponent. He had given up the battle at sudden thought of the upturned, drifting canoe, and had gone after it, drawing strength for the effort from his madness. He had recovered it, after the most terrific and painful exertions, before it had reached swift water; and after hiding it he had lain down and remained inert for several hours.

Old Pod had not fared any better than Ian MacLean in the struggle, although no knife had been used against him. His bruises were as many and tender as those of the big New Yorker; he had been nearly drowned and nearly strangled; the blind blow that had lost him his knife had come within an ounce of dislocating his right shoulder, and another swing of the

big fist had raised a lump like a plum on the side of his head.

He lay motionless for hours, not fully conscious and yet not asleep, numbed by pain and the utter exhaustion of muscle and nerve. He got to his hands and feet shortly after midnight and crawled through the tangle of brush on the slope of the bank until he came to a little, ice-cold spring that he knew of. Here he drank deep and bathed his sprains and bruises, then lay down and slept until dawn.

When he awoke it was to a phase of insanity, a mood of madness, deeper and more deadly and more bitter than anything he had yet known. He felt a weight of hatred on his soul—of hatred toward everyone and black distaste for everything. His former moods of crazy mirth, impish violence and cunning but futile hostility were gone and forgotten—eaten up by the acid of this intense madness. Now he wanted to kill, quickly and surely. But he had lost his knife. Now he remembered all the particulars of the fight in which he had lost it. He lay all day near the hidden spring, without food or the desire for it, drinking frequently, sleeping much and occasionally bathing his wounds.

The two guides returned to camp without the canoe that had escaped from Mr. MacLean, believing that it had drifted into white water and so been broken and sunk.

That day passed without any formidable or startling action among the humans on Fisher Creek ; but drama and romance played on, and comedy and tragedy ; and

extraordinary unforeseen things continued to take shape.

Sir John was not entirely deaf to the warnings and promises in the air; but he sat calmly in his tent and wrote very neatly in his note-book, weighing the nicest meanings of words and thoughts, considering their suggestions and colours, and setting them down in curious and beautiful designs. James Reward, all unsuspicious of any trouble but the obvious ones of the problem of his father and the affair of Alice and Bob and the odd millions, wandered about the clearings and smoked cigars and thought dizzily in a small circle. Ian MacLean was far too sore and stiff for any employment more active than passive obedience to the will of Jessie Sabatis; but he was in a much better state of mind than he had enjoyed in a long time—for had he not come nearer to making a capture of the madman than any one, or two, of the others had come? He considered that exploit with satisfaction and ranked it higher than many of his offensive operations against lions and elephants.

Bob Sayle was worried about June, who had seemed to avoid him of late—that is, since the morning of the day before; and Tom Snicken was worried about both June and Bob.

As for the others, Amos Dingle was entirely normal; and Alice Reward and Malachi Davis looked blissfully content with life and innocently sly, like kittens who have indulged in a dish of cream and know of a plump canary.

June de la Reward kept very close to her father that

day and tried her best and bravest to feel an interest in the things he read to her from his note-book occasionally. It was late in the afternoon when she said, suddenly, "Don't you think that we have exhausted the possibilities of Fisher Creek, Dad? You have learned everything there is to know of this branch of the family."

He laid down his pen and lit a cigarette.

"Not that, dear," he said. "One can never learn, in this confused and inadequate life, all that there is to know about everything. However, you are right in a general way. We know quite enough for our purposes. I should like to have a talk with poor Poddington, but fear it is out of the question. He wouldn't talk, I imagine. Are you tired of all this?"

"Yes," she answered. "There are thousands of other places in this same wilderness, I am sure, that are as attractive as this and at the same time free from the constant menace of a madman."

"You are right, dear, and I am a selfish old fellow not to have seen it before. Where do you want to go to?—farther up the river or out to civilisation?"

"I should like to see cities again, Dad,—but not any that I already know. I don't want to go home just yet. Is there any new place you want to go to that you wouldn't mind taking me to with you?"

Sir John gazed at her very attentively and affectionately in his short-sighted way for a few seconds, then looked down at his notebook.

"I shall think of something, little girl," he said, "and

we can leave here as soon as Ian is in condition to make the trip down to the village. That should be in three or four days' time."

"But I thought we might start to-morrow morning, or even to-night, Dad," she returned, with averted face.

The expression of the knight's face became suddenly alert, and the introspective half-light in his eyes changed and flashed. He turned on the box that served him for a chair and stooped to where she sat on his folded blankets. He put his right hand down and lifted both her hands from her lap.

"My dear and dearest daughter, you are unhappy," he said. "Who has made you unhappy? Has that ass MacLean been fool enough to bother you?"

"No, I am tired of this, that is all—and Mr. MacLean has nothing to do with it, Dad. I—I am not unhappy but—I am tired of this."

"By heaven, don't cry!" exclaimed the knight. "Don't cry, please, June. You are unhappy—and you must tell me about it and let me help you. Have I not always tried to help you and keep you from unhappiness?"

"There is nothing to tell; and I am not going to cry—because there is nothing to cry about."

Having said this, she immediately began to cry; and as Sir John continued to hold her hands clasped in his right hand, she bowed her head and hid her eyes against his wrist. He felt her tears on it. He knelt and pressed his cheek to her bowed head.

"Poor little girl," he whispered. "I might have thought of this—that you would grow up some day; and I am always forgetting that you are not still the baby I carried down to the boat that night when the moon was shining as bright as day and the big land-crabs ran from my path through the cocoanut trees. Then I could guard you from unhappiness. But now I'm afraid you are a woman; and what a blind fellow I have been not to see it before, what a stupid fellow not to have expected it. Tell me, dear—is it the heart?"

"I have been grown up for years," she replied, drawing slightly away from him and looking at him.

"Are you unhappy about young Sayle?" he asked.

She turned her face away and did not answer.

"I know about that," he said. "A mole could see it—how he loves you and has loved you since his first glimpse of you. I like him and believe in him. I think you care, dear."

"No, I do not care—but I want to go away," she replied. "What do I know of him to make me care?"

"In this thing one knows without learning and even cares without knowing. It was so with me, June; and she had eyes like yours, child, and you have her hands and her voice and her magic; and for her sake, and the memory of her, I took a bullet in my side and carried you away in my arms, and my blood stained your night-dress and your little bare feet."

"Dad, I think there will never again be such a lover

as you," she said. "I would not, and could not have treated you so."

"But love failed me—or I failed love," he returned. "It was not love's fault. Tell me about this grief of yours, little girl, and I'll show you how to turn it into joy. I am a very clever person, you must know, and have been knighted for it."

She hid her face against his shoulder and said, "He should have a great deal of money, which his father should have given to him, but if he does not marry a certain person he will not get a cent of it. And he is accustomed to a great deal of money—and his father intended him to have this. It is a fortune of millions. Mr. Reward told me this—and asked me to go away and not let Bob know where I had gone to—for Bob's sake—so that he may regain the money that should be his by inheritance."

Sir John sprang to his feet.

"The fool!" he exclaimed. "Confound his cheek and his stupidity. I shall let him know that you, that no woman, can be insulted with impunity where I am! Damn his ignorant brutality, his—his——! I'll go to him now and shake an apology out of his throat with my fingers!"

She held him and talked to him until he became calm, and then kissed him for his outbreak of fury. She lit a cigarette for him and led him back to his seat at the little table. She realised how great her influence was over him and how sincere had been his threat to take James Reward by the throat. She had seen him once before like that,

when she was twelve years old, and on that occasion had saved an impertinent cabman from a trouncing.

Sir John agreed to take her down river next day.

"It will be undoubtedly the dignified thing to do, under the circumstances," he said, drily. "And we'll be dignified though we break hearts. We'll go away; and then it will be up to young Sayle."

The air was heavy and still over the wilderness all day; after sunset there was lightning, at first in broad flares that lit all the sky behind the low banks and flying wracks of cloud, and then in round blue bursts that seemed to burn through to heaven itself and shaken lances of flame that stabbed the earth. A wind came tumbling up over the black horizon, roaring like a flood tide of the sea. The rain followed and thundered with the wind

All living things sought shelter; and old Pod Reward crept beneath his upturned canoe.

The first fury of the storm passed in two hours. The moment the wind stilled and the rain slackened, Pod launched the canoe and made his way up against the slow current, close under the northern shore. The wide lightning continued to flash and the thunder to roll and pound low among the hills. Pod went up a hundred yards beyond the clearing, crossed the stream and went ashore. He hid the canoe in the drenched brush and approached the camp cautiously. He was close to the upper edge of the clearing when the second fury of the storm opened

with a fire blue opening of the whole roof of the world and a stunning, crashing, splitting, tumbling detonation of all heaven's and hell's high explosives that shook earth and air and the hearts of man and beast. Again the rain fell upon the staggered wilderness with a booming, drumming confusion of wet tumult.

The second fury of the storm passed; and with the first lift of it old Pod, wet as a musquash, crept back into the shelter of the canoe. In one hand he held Amos Dingle's sheath-knife, a sharper and heavier than that lost by him in the river. For several hours in the early morning the rain ceased entirely, though thunder continued to mutter; and during that time Pod went farther up stream and hunted out one of his hidden stores of food.

The storm gathered again in force soon after dawn. June agreed with her father that it was impossible to make the twenty mile trip to Plaster Rock in such weather. All the meals for the whole party were cooked on the rusty stove in the cabin, and the guides carried the food to the several tents. June spent the day in Sir John's tent. Bob Sayle looked in there shortly after the mid-day meal and for a long time talked about a great many things in which he felt no particular interest. He talked generally and both June and Sir John gave him their attention, and the knight made a number of apt comments and profound observations on the subjects in hand and life at large. Bob became silent at last; and Sir John took up his pen and fell

to work. Then Bob looked at June, who was very carefully not looking at him. He continued to look at her for several minutes ; and still she seemed to be unaware of his existence. So he studied the ground at his feet and smoked with a preoccupied air and with the tail of his left eye he saw her turn her face and regard him with an expression of the utmost tenderness and concern in her eyes. And the look was not only of the eyes. It was also of the lips, the brow, the chin—of every feature of the small, vivid face.

By that look, the young man was at once exhilirated and depressed, assured and puzzled, comforted and alarmed.

There flamed a sudden explosion out of the grey murk of the sky, beyond the veils of the rain and mist, that glared round and blue through the canvas of the tent. June exclaimed " Oh ! " and Sir John stayed his pen and looked up in time to dazzle his eyes with it. Then came a rending and tumbling of thunder as if the walls of the universe were being thrown down. As the echoes of that stunning tumult faded, the floodgates of heaven lifted and out poured the source of all rains and the winds of the world. The sloping roof of the tent smoked with the fine mist of the water that was driven through the canvas ; and, the next moment, the tent filled and bellied like a balloon and the blankets humped and writhed on the ground and the pages of Sir John's notebook were turned one by one with incredible speed. Then one side of the tent was torn clear of the ground with a sound of pegs and hard wood being struck together. It lifted, flapped high,

flattened out and streamed on the gale like a jib let go. And then it went—the whole tent—wide-winged into the tumultuous dark like a gigantic moth. You may be sure that Bob saved June from being blown away.

CHAPTER XXIV

A TELEGRAM FOR JAMES REWARD

THE storm subsided soon after the blowing away of the tents. That was not a laughing matter at the time. Nobody laughed about it, in fact, until a good many hours later, after Sir John's tent had been recovered from the creek, and Archer Wallace's from a tree, and both had been set up again.

By dark, both rain and wind had ceased entirely. It was then that Malachi Davis, anxious for news from his sister, launched a canoe without so much as "by your leave" to anyone, and started for Plaster Rock. He took the rifle along with him, for he had no intention of submitting to either a delay or an upset at the hands of Pod Reward or any other madman. Nobody or nothing attempted to crawl into his canoe. He made a fire and tea, and slept for a few hours, at a point far down the Tobique; and he breakfasted with Widow Carson. After breakfast he went to the post office and found a letter for himself and a message for James Reward. The message had been telephoned in from the nearest telegraph office, two days before.

Dan Whelan said that it sounded an extremely foolish message and did not seem to mean anything at all; but Malachi suspected that it was a private code. Dan also expressed his astonishment at the fact of James Reward being in the country and his keen desire for further information on the subject. Malachi got away with the message and the letter, without leaving any enlightenment behind him, and went two miles up river before he read his sister's letter.

He went ashore and tore open the envelope with trembling fingers. At the first glimpse of the letter within he caught his breath with a gasp of relief. He read a few lines and began to shuffle his feet. His eyes lit and a grin twitched and pulled at the corners of his mouth. He read more, and skipped about on the pebbles, and uttered a whoop of joy. He waved the letter around his head.

All was well with the back of the thieving guardian's skull, and all was known of his dishonesty. Nancy had consulted a lawyer, and the guardian had been very generously given the choice between writing a little confession and a true story of his interview with his nephew Peter Warren and hearing nothing more of the matter, and of defying Nancy and Peter and the law. He had made his choice and would be well enough to write his little confession and story within the week; and in the meantime he had admitted all his knavery to the lawyer before witnesses. So Malachi Davis had a reunion with Peter Warren, and they danced

and rejoiced together on the dry shingle beside the gliding Tobique water. Peter was only twenty-four, you must remember, and Malachi only a few months old.

Malachi did not strain himself on the return journey. He took his time, relishing his fever of impatience. Although as Peter Warren he had lived in four years more than his father had lived in a life-time, yet life was in front of him and the good taste of it was fresh on his lips. He reached the clearing on Fisher Creek in the afternoon; and the first person he met, at the top of the bank, was James Reward.

"Where have you been with that canoe?" asked James.

"Plaster Rock, to get a letter from my sister," replied the youth.

"You had your nerve with you, I think," said James, glaring.

"I have never yet been seen anywhere without it," returned the long youth. "There's the Major. Ask him."

"You are changed," said Mr. Reward. "Whatever the change is, it is not for the better. What the devil are you playing at, Davis?"

"I have finished playing at the little game of Malachi Davis and am well started on a much bigger game," replied the other. "Hey there, Major old son, that's jake! You know what. I'm myself again."

Archer Wallace descended the bushy bank and grasped the younger man's hand.

"I congratulate you, Peter," he said, quietly but

heartily ; and he turned to Bob Sayle who had followed him, and to James, and continued, " This is Peter Warren, who was in my battalion in France and Flanders."

Peter blushed and grinned and hitched up his trousers of rural design—and in the act of hitching he suddenly remembered the message for Mr. Reward. He produced it from his hip-pocket and handed it over, with apologies.

By this time, June and Tom Snicken and Sir John had joined the group ; and Archer Wallace went on with the story of Peter Warren, alias Malachi Davis. Peter slipped away and up the bank unnoticed. James Reward opened the envelope and read his message unnoticed.

James Reward stared at the paper in his hand. He looked astonished, puzzled, incredulous and angry. He swore softly, glanced around him at the people listening so intently to the Major's measured talk, then crushed the paper in his hand and turned away. He went slowly up the bank, muttering " I have read it wrong —or they've all gone mad." He saw his daughter Alice and the Malachi fellow talking about twenty yards away, with unusual animation and earnestness ; but without giving them a thought he slipped into his tent, uncrumpled the message from New York and again studied it with an intolerant, heady confusion of emotions. Presently he sat down and, with the help of a thin book from a pocket of his coat, carefully decoded the message. He changed colour.

" The young idiots ! " he exclaimed. " What have

they been trying to do ? Well, I must go and straighten this out. Nothing else for it."

He set out for Plaster Rock within an hour of receiving the message, saying that an important business called him to New York, and that he would be back in ten or twelve days. He asked Bob to come with him ; and Bob refused, point blank, regarding him with hostile and suspicious eyes and a clouded brow. He asked Alice to come, and then would not wait for her to pack her bags. She packed very slowly, 'tis true. She promised to follow in a day or two. So he embarked with Amos Dingle and sped away, determined to keep right on in the canoe until he came to a train headed in the right direction even if this should extend his journey to half-way down the St. John River. He was in no mood for waiting.

Peter Warren's story was well received. Even Ian MacLean, now a hero of considerable repute himself, was pleased with it and congratulated the young man on his wit and daring and good fortune. Peter threw aside all his Malachi Davis tricks and manner of speech and, at the first opportunity, the rustic garments of his deception as well. Bob Sayle contributed a pair of grey flannel trousers not much the worse for wear to his wardrobe, Archer Wallace handed over a shirt and Tom Snicken a pair of canvas shoes.

Bob Sayle was puzzled and distressed. Even Tom Snicken was puzzled. June, whose behaviour was the cause of their distress and uncertainty, avoided them both. Bob made several attempts during

the evening to obtain a private interview with her, but without success. She kept close to the knight. After the evening meal, Archer Wallace took Bob by the arm and walked him away to the top of the bank.

"You look hipped, Sayle," he said.

"You don't look particularly merry and bright yourself," replied Bob.

"True; but my reason for feeling hipped and looking it is not easily cured, I fear—and yours is easily cured, I think," said Archer. "No, it isn't that," he continued smiling slightly. "If that were so, I should be in a bad situation indeed—but it seems that my heart suffered almost as much as my mind that time. It was blurred. The trouble with me is that my brain has dug up pictures of the very things that once made a blank of it—of my experiences that time I was out among the craters with the dead men, wounded. I'd have gone mad at the time—after I was brought in—if I had remembered; and now I am remembering. It began two nights ago. Night is the worst time. That is what's troubling me, Bob."

"I am sorry," said Bob. "I wonder if you wouldn't feel better in town, in London or New York, than in this place."

They sat down side by side in the tall, wild grass.

"I'll try the cities," said the Major. "But they may not bother me when I get used to them. Now they keep me awake. That's the mischief of it! They scare me wide awake! But all that you have to do, my son, is go into that tent and take that girl by the

wrist and ask her what you have done that she doesn't approve of. Then she'll tell you ; and if, by any chance she doesn't like you as well as we think and hope that she does, she'll let you know all about it somehow or another. I feel sure that my advice is exactly what Sir John's would be if you were to consult him, for he is a wise old bird and not so old but that he can still see men and women and things as we see them. I am in half a mind to consult him about these beastly memories of mine."

Bob did not take the advice. He believed that June cared for him, and he felt that someone or something was working against him with her. He was shrewd enough to suspect James Reward of being that one, and had intended to interview him on the subject that very night.

Tom Snicken joined Bob and the Major.

"I think we should bring the canoe all the way up to the fire, where the sentry can keep his eye on it," he said. "We are reduced to one canoe until Amos returns."

"You are right, of course, Snick—but why didn't you think of it before? Two men have to be on guard, anyway, with that old fellow crawling around."

"I'll tell you, sir. We may need a canoe to-morrow —and who knows when Amos will be back? He may go visiting all his friends. So we had better watch that canoe close between now and morning —for Sir John has packed his notebook and Miss de la Reward has got together an assortment of foodstuffs."

"What!" exclaimed Bob. "Do you mean that they are going away?"

"I mean that they are all packed and ready to go, sir."

"And Mr. MacLean?"

"No, sir. Mr. MacLean is as ignorant and innocent as the babe unborn. It is quite evident that Mr. MacLean does not enjoy their confidence any more than we do. My idea is that they are intending to give somebody the slip, and that the intention is inspired by a sense of duty, sir, rather than by inclination. If ever I saw a person who had decided to act from motives of pure nobility, it is Miss June."

"What do you mean, Tom? Cut out the long words."

"She is piping her eye, sir."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Arthur Wallace.

"Damn!" exclaimed Bob. And then, "Is Sir John forcing her to go?"

"Not him. He doesn't seem to want to go any more than she does."

"Up comes that canoe, anyway," said Archer Wallace. "I am in command of the camp's defences to-night. Anyone wanting a canoe or an explanation must come to me."

Thus it happened that June's departure from Fisher Creek was again postponed.

Bob walked straight up to June the moment he caught sight of her next morning and said, in a very low and unsteady voice, "If you don't give me a chance to talk to you alone I shall say all

that I have to here and now at the top of my voice."

She looked at him strangely.

"Do you mean that?" she asked.

"I mean it—so help me!"

"But you have no right to force me to listen to you against my will."

"That is true; and if you don't want to listen to me—to hear me or see me again—say so now. Look at me and say it, June, and I promise you that you'll never set eyes on me again, if I can help it."

She glanced away from him, then back at him. She paled and reddened. Her eyes grew very dark and her lips quivered. She put out her hand suddenly and touched his hand. Then she turned and moved toward the stream, looking back once to see that he followed. He followed, you may be sure, and overtook her in four strides. They went on side by side. They left the clearing, following the top of the bank; and for a full minute neither spoke. She gazed straight ahead, and he gazed at her and walked slam into bushes and trees.

"June," he said suddenly. "June, I can't stand this uncertainty any longer. You meant to go away last night. I am poor, but I can work. June, I love you! Please don't go so fast. Listen to me; look at me; and if there's no chance for me, tell me so now."

She halted and looked at him.

"You do care!" he exclaimed.

"Wait," she said. "You are not poor. All the

money that should be yours can be yours for the asking."

"For the asking," he returned, hotly and bitterly. "Why should I ask for what is rightfully mine? And who am I to ask? No, I'll never ask for it, and I don't need it. June, I am poor, and I don't care. Since I first saw you I have not cared about anything but you."

"Wait, Bob," she said. "It is true, then, that you will not ask for the money. You have said so, and I believe you. Come let us walk on. I have something to tell you—something that Dad told me and that I have never told to anyone in the world."

She took his hand, and so they walked onward through the young spruces and larches.

"You do care," he said. "June, you do care. You can't deny it."

"Please wait—until I tell you what I must tell you," she begged. "Bob, you do not know who my father was."

"No. But what does it matter? His name was Witchery. Alice Reward told me that."

"Witchery was my mother's name. My father's name was Innits."

"What of it, dear? It is an unusual name, of course; but what has it got to do with you and me now?"

"He was a major in the South African war. He left the army before that war was over and took my mother and me to the West Indies. I was two years old then, and their only

child. They had been married for five or six years then. I don't remember them—not even my mother. My father had to leave the army, Bob."

He looked at her with devotion, eagerness and a shade of puzzled inquiry in his glowing eyes.

CHAPTER XXV

Always the wind was hinting something elusive and wise,
Something I heard and lost and could not understand . . .
Dear, I ceased to question when my hand found your hand
And I saw the wisdom of joy in the wonder of your eyes.

Ever the wind was crying something elusive and wise
Of empty hearts, dead hopes, and ghosts of wand'ring ships . . .
Dear, I ceased to question when my lips found your lips
And I saw the wonder of love in the wisdom of your eyes.

BOB'S colour fled in sympathy with the girl's wan cheeks.

"I'm sorry," he stammered—"but that was long ago—before you can remember. And it may have been a mistake. I have heard of cases of the kind—have been very near to several—and the fellows concerned were not cowards. It is a tricky business to put your finger on a coward in the face of the enemy. The real cowards are not there. It was very likely a mistake dear."

"No, it was not a mistake," she replied. "Dad was

there and saw it—but Dad did not give evidence at the court-martial. But he was an enemy of my father's—I mean that my father, the coward, was an enemy of Dad's. Do you understand, Bob, that my father was broken for being a coward ? "

" Yes, dear—but if he was a thorough-going coward why did he go up the line at all ? Couldn't he wangle a job at base ? "

" He tried to. He had a job at the base for a time and held it as long as he could. Do not try to defend him."

" Do you think I care what your father was ? Yes, I care—but only because you do. June, why do you try to frighten me away from you ? Nothing can turn me from you or frighten me from you except yourself."

" Wait, I have not told you all. Dad was in love with my mother. She treated him badly in some way—he would never tell me and always says it was a foolish misunderstanding—and Dad married someone else, you know. She is a dear, and very wealthy ; but she never thinks of Dad, with his wisdom and his expeditions and books, as anything but a queer boy. She used to find him amusing. But she has nothing to do with my shame. My mother went away with that Innits — my father — and for a long time Dad thought they were married. But they weren't. After he was cashiered he took her to France and left her there for a year. He came back to us and took us to Antigua ; but Dad knew

all about him then and was following him everywhere. Dad knew that he had planned to marry someone with a great deal of money; and at last he came to the island in a small schooner and rowed himself ashore one moonlight night and walked into our house. All the servants had run away and my father was sitting alone in a room facing the sand and the sea. The house stood behind a thin grove of cocoanut trees. Dad had seen him as he came through the grove, sitting at a table with candles in glass windshades at his elbows. He did not look up when Dad crossed the verandah and entered the room. His hands were on the table—and Dad saw blood on the knuckles of his right hand. There were open papers on the table, too, and a glass, and a bottle of brandy and a clay water-bottle. Dad saw all these things in a flash as he stepped into the room. He shut the door behind him; and then the big man—Innits—my—father—looked up. He swore at Dad, for he knew that Dad knew all about him.

"Dad asked him where his wife was; and he called Dad a fool and said he hadn't a wife but expected to marry in a few months. Then Dad told him that he would marry within twenty-four hours. Then Dad heard me crying in another room. Innits slipped his right hand among the papers on the table and fired before Dad could jump. The bullet hit Dad in the side and he immediately went quite mad with rage and disgust and hate. A little later he found himself standing over my father,

with a silver candle-stick in his hand. Only one candle continued to burn on the table. My father lay very still, bleeding terribly. Dad dropped the candle-stick and went into another room. He found me crying under my mosquito-bar. He found mother lying on a bed. Her face was very thin and frightfully bruised. Her arms were bruised. She was dead—and had been dead for hours. Then Dad took me up in his arms and returned to the room facing the sea. He deliberately kicked the man on the floor —but he did not move. Dad had killed him with the candle-stick. He removed the shade from the burning candle and tipped it over among the papers. He poured all the brandy that was left in the bottle over the papers, then carried me out of that house and down to the boat —and he has been father and mother to me ever since. But my blood is that of the two people he left dead behind him in the burning house."

"My dear, my dear," whispered Bob.

He put an arm around her shoulders and drew her to him and pressed her face against his breast. She stood so for a moment, rigid and motionless, then suddenly relaxed and clung to him. He held her tight and felt her slender body shake with her sobs.

"Now you know—what I am—what I was born —nothing—an outcast," she cried between her sobs.

Bob stooped and whispered, "You are every-

thing that is wonderful and beautiful and desirable. You are adorable and dear and good—a girl out of a dream, a princess out of a fairy-tale. Be brave, dear, and try to forget that story. It is nothing but a story to you, as it is only a story to me. Only your father, John de la Reward, saw it and suffered it, and so it is real only for him. It is not real for you, June."

"I am what I was born—the daughter of a coward, a beast and a murderer—and of the—of my mother."

"Your mother has paid. She loved a brute—and she paid. She was a beautiful woman, and John loved her. Thousands of good women have done the same madness. I think you need feel no shame of her, dear. And you are not what you were born, for you are what you have lived. Dear heart, look up at me—for I have loved you with all my heart and mind since the first moment you looked at me. I have followed you, ignorant of everything concerning you except my love—and if I should lose you now—dear, tell me that I have not lost you."

She murmured something against the breast of his flannel shirt.

"I didn't hear it," he said.

And at that moment he heard something else in the thicket of willows and young birches in front of him. He raised his head sharply; and then old Pod Reward threw the knife that he had stolen from Amos Dingle. It struck Bob in

the muscles of the neck, pierced deep and hung there.

June felt his arms tighten suddenly, relax, then tighten and loosen again. She felt him sway. The palms of her hands had been flat against his breast all this time, and her eyes had been tight shut; now she felt a sudden warm moisture on the fingers of her left hand. She opened her eyes, drew back her head and looked at her hand. Both arms went around him quick as thought; and as he sank to the ground she sank with him, easing his fall with all her strength.

She knelt over him, an arm under his head, and regarded him with a face wan as death and eyes black with misery. He smiled up at her.

"My fault," he said, calmly. "Forgot about old Pod. Tell me what you said—and then run for old Jessie. He won't strike again—at either of us—to-day."

"I said that I love," she whispered. "I love you! I love you! How can I leave you?—you are bleeding so!"

"Kiss me, then."

She kissed him on the lips and the eyes.

"Now fifty Pods couldn't kill me," he said. "He hasn't hit my wind-pipe, that's certain—or anything important, I think. Tie your hankie around my neck, dear—just here—fairly tight—and then hop away and fetch Jessie and Sir John's flask."

She took the linen kerchief from her own neck and tied it deftly around his with steady,

tender fingers. She kissed him again, swiftly and passionately, then sprang to her feet and ran.

Bob lay very still, with the fingers of his right on his neck, close against the blade of the knife. He was bleeding freely, but not freely enough to suggest a slit jugular. The knife had struck too far to the side for that. He put his left hand around and felt the point of the blade protruding. That relieved him greatly. He raised his head and shoulders a little and saw old Pod crouched half a dozen yards away, glaring at him. He sat up, tied June's handkerchief tighter and pulled out the knife. He sighed with the pain of it and shut his eyes tight for a second. He opened his eyes wide, grinned at the madman and threatened him with the wet, red blade.

Pod's eyes wavered. He turned and crept away.

Bob felt light-headed, slightly dizzy and a trifle sick and very happy. Something wonderful had happened. A thing was true that was too wonderful to be true. One of those things that only happen in dreams had happened to him when he was wide awake. Yes, it was true; for here was her handkerchief around his neck, wet and warm with his blood. He remembered seeing blood on her fingers as she turned from him to run for help. Yes, it was real—as real as pure joy can ever be real.

Suddenly June appeared, darting through the brush, with a flask in her hand. Her hair was flying, her face was flushed with eagerness and

her eyes were still dark with anxiety. She uttered a soft cry of indescribable tenderness and joy upon catching sight of him sitting open-eyed and conscious, sped to him, knelt beside him and pressed his dizzy head to her breast. Holding him so, she tipped the flask to his lips. He sipped the brandy. She withdrew the flask and kissed him. Neither spoke—for what, in the whole wide range of heaven and earth, was there to say. They had found love and escaped death. She gave him more brandy and another kiss ; and thus she was treating him when Jessie Sabatis and Sir John de la Reward appeared on the scene.

Old Jessie made light of Bob's wound. He had lost a good deal of blood—and that was the worst that could be said of it. She would have him healed and sound, and as strong as he ever was, in a few days. She bathed his wound with a brew she happened to have ready, and bandaged it. After another sip of brandy—for the others had been very small—Bob set out for camp between June and the knight, with an arm around the neck of each. They were met by Tom Snicken before they reached the clearing.

Old Jessie had used the last of her supply of Gluskap's-hand on Ian MacLean ; but she thought the commoner medicine would do for this case and so did not mention the magic plant. Bob lay in his tent all day, drinking the old squaw's mixtures occasionally and talking to June about the wonderful thing that had happened to them. He felt comfortable

and almost too happy to live. After sunset he became gradually conscious of the pain in his wound. It felt at times as if the knife were still in it, and now and again as if the knife were again entering it. He did not speak—but June soon read it in his eyes. Old Jessie soothed it with a compress of pounded herbs. He went to sleep a few hours later, and June left him to the care of old Jessie.

June stole back to Bob's tent shortly after midnight and saw that he was still sleeping. Old Jessie also was asleep. June visited Bob again before sunrise and found him resting quietly. Neither his doctor nor his nurse knew what suffering he had endured in the hours between those brief periods of sleep. When Jessie examined the wound at noon she expressed anxiety; and the patient was in a high fever a few hours later.

June's first thought was of a doctor. If she and Sir John took Bob down to Plaster Rock much time would be saved, and he would be as well off in a canoe as elsewhere. Sir John agreed with her in this; and old Jessie was silent.

The canoe was gone, however. The canoe and Malachi Davis, or Peter Warren, were gone. Nobody had seen Peter go. Perhaps he was not far away. And where was Alice Reward? She had gone with Peter, of course, and equally of course they would be back for dinner, canoe and all.

"She has taken two bags," said Tom, after a brief investigation. "It's unfortunate that she should do that sort of thing for the first time in her life just when

we need the canoe. Here is a letter addressed 'To whom it may concern,' which means anybody, I suppose."

"Open it, Thomas," said Sir John.

It wasn't much of a letter. This was all it said :— "Peter and I have just gone to get married while father is away, to avoid useless discussion. We'll be back in a few days. Don't worry. Alice."

Old Jessie Sabatis told June that the only chance for Bob lay in that great medicine known as Gluskap's-hand, and that she would set out immediately in search of it. It was difficult to obtain, however. She had known of cases when it had been sought for days and nights together, in vain. Bob's wound was in great need of it, or of something equally potent. A delay of twenty-four hours would prove fatal, to the best of her knowledge and belief.

Then June thought of the plants which Bob had given her that day she had walked so far up stream alone, and the story he had told her about the god Gluskap. She ran to her tent, found the wilted and partially pressed plants where she had hidden them in one of her bags, and returned with them at top speed to the old squaw. Her heart stood still as Jessie regarded the wilted things with keen eyes.

"Good!" said old Jessie.

The girl's heart leapt and tears blinked to her eyes. She caught the ancient Maliseet in her arms and kissed her violently.

While the potent medicine was being prepared in

several forms, at the rusty stove in the shack, June sat with the patient. He suffered excruciating pain through his neck and head. There had been poison of some sort on Pod Reward's knife. Sometimes he groaned with pain, losing his grip for a moment in the daze and weakness of fever. He felt June's tears on his hot and restless hands.

Old Jessie returned to the tent in fifteen minutes and poulticed the wound. She renewed the poultice ten minutes later, and yet again in half an hour. Soon after that a brew of the magic roots was ready, and Bob drank nearly half a pint of it.

Archer Wallace and Tom Snicken searched the woods all day for the madman, Tom armed with the rifle and the Major with Noel Sabatis's duck-gun. Even Mr. MacLean went out on several short expeditions, with an axe in his hand. But they saw nothing more of Pod Reward than of the several lynx who haunted the locality. The rope was not a part of the equipment of any one of the three that day. Each had come to the conclusion, without consulting anyone, that the thing to do with Pod Reward was to rid the earth of him at the first opportunity.

No one slept that night. Fear of a stab from the dark with a poisoned knife kept them all wide-eyed and attentive to the furtive sounds of the wilderness.

Before dawn, old Jessie told June that the poison was out of the wound. The girl lay down where she had been crouching for hours past, which

was on a blanket in the door-way of Bob's tent, and fell asleep. Sir John celebrated the good news by stirring up a corner of one of the fallen fires and putting coffee to boil. After a cup or two he took a plunge in the stream, lit a cigarette and returned to his neglected note-book. Bob awoke soon after sunrise, free of pain.

The hunting of the madman was continued that day, but with no more success than on the day before. By noon the fact that Bob was out of danger was apparent to the least trained eye. Save for weakness, a slight fever and the unhealed wound, he was cured. All inflammation was gone.

Amos Dingle and the canoe reached camp about four o'clock that afternoon. Amos had been visiting friends and relatives all around and about Plaster Rock. He stood aghast at the news of the elopement of Alice and Peter. He had not seen or heard anything of them down river.

Soon after the evening meal, while Sir John was in Bob's tent and others were busy gathering wood for the fires, Noel Sabatis happened to look into the knight's abode and mark the shine of a silver flask. Noel had been a long time without a drink. He glanced around, then stepped within. The first hurried gulp brought tears to his eyes ; but he held on heroically to the job in hand until the flask was empty. The fine old brandy gave him courage of a sort—and any sort of courage was what he needed in those days. He went from the knight's tent to where the duck-gun stood against a stump, and from there to where the canoe lay half-way up the bank. The sun was behind the hills by now and

twilight deepened in the valley. Noel stood the big gun upright against a willow and took hold of a gunnel of the canoe; and at that moment Tom Snicken caught sight of him and came jumping down the bank to him.

"What's got into you all of a sudden, and where d'you think you're going with that canoe?" asked Tom.

Noel stood up and looked at him with gleaming eyes.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom. "My aunt! What has waked you up, old son?"

"Go down river, me," said Noel. "Back two-t'ree hour."

"But aren't you afraid of old Pod? He'll do you in if he gets you. What's your game, anyway?"

"Good game. Back two-t'ree hours."

"I'll come with you, Noel. You might be attacked by your friend."

"No, you stop. You stop an' say nothin'. Back soon."

"But what is your game? Are you going gunning for Pod?"

"Forget um. Forget um, forget gun. You no see me go, what?"

"Have it your own way, old son. I believe you for your mother's sake, and in spite of the fact that I know you are a bad old bird—but if you don't bring that canoe home before morning I'll set all the police in Canada looking for you. If you try any tricks on me, old dear, you'll wish that Pod Reward had murdered you long ago."

" A'right," returned Noel impatiently.

He slid the canoe into the water, laid the gun flat near the stern and embarked. He let the current carry him down, dipping the paddle only to keep the canoe on her course. The narrow valley was already fu'l of night, but a brightness struck the sliding water here and there from the shell-green sky. Two faint stars and a rind of moon showed against the darkening green. There was no wind. Night-hawks swooped and twanged and little bats flitted from darkness to darkness, blacker than the gloom of the valley.

Sir John de la Reward's fine and ancient brandy lay warm and reassuring on Noel's stomach ; and the glow of it, slowly but surely growing, warmed his blood and stirred in his heart and whispered in his brain. It brightened his memory and sharpened his wits. It made a new man of him—a bold, cunning fellow of a badly scared, lazy old Indian. Gin had never done so much for him. If it had, Pod Reward would have gone to his fathers long ago. What a pity that such courage and energy are for so brief a time and that a furry mouth and an ache behind the eyes are all that the morrow knows of them !

With his brightened memory, Noel Sabatis recalled to his mind's eye all the indignities and worse to which Pod Reward had ever subjected him. He called them up one by one, looked at them, felt them anew, then added them to the fine brandy flame in his heart. They burned well ; but the burning did not destroy them. With his sharpened wits he wondered why he had put up with Pod's tyranny for so long. He was as good a

man as Pod, any day, and had as good a right to live on Fisher Creek or elsewhere as any Reward who ever smoked tobacco. He saw now that he had been nothing better than a slave of Pod's for many years—that Pod had held him down by brute-mastery and several kinds of fear. One fear had been that of the law; but had not the law always been more of a menace to Pod than to himself? There was the matter of the pedlar, for instance. He, Noel Sabatis, had taken no part in that —but for ten dollars and a "square-face" he had become a party to him. He wondered how he could have been such a weak fool. And it had been the same in the affair of Steve Doran. He had not raised a finger in that business, and yet that devil Pod had held it over his head like a club.

Once, for ten minutes or so, Noel slowed the downward drift of the canoe with back strokes of the paddle. He was not in a hurry. He had plenty of time; and if his great plan did not work out to-night, still many nights remained. But he hoped for to-night. He was in the mood for settling old scores. The spirit of the old brandy still burned a clear and ever-growing flame within him. The darkness deepened in the narrow valley and the green faded from the sky.

Pod had planned a mighty blow for that night. He was sick of delivering a bruise here and a stab there. He would sneak into camp, arm himself with any available weapon—an axe, for choice—and see how much damage he could do before he was dispatched. Life was no longer amusing to him, you may remember. He had reached the depths of madness. That he had planned—but a glimpse of Noel Sabatis drifting

down stream caused him to revise his plans for that night. To waylay Noel, and scare him crazy, and choke him to death slowly in the black water—that was a temptation which he could not resist. So he went down ahead of the canoe to his favourite place of ambush.

CHAPTER XXVI

POD REWARD'S LAST DIRTY PLAY

THE canoe drifted slowly down the deep, slow water, where everything was as black as the tomb save for the strip of colorless sky far overhead with its pale rind of moon that shed no light. Noel Sabatis sang. His singing had always offended Pod Reward. He kept his course in mid-stream with an occasional twist of the paddle. Birds piped in the black coverts on either hand ; an owl hooted afar ; a trout jumped with a tinkling splash and a musquash or fisher swam past with a tiny wet ripple of sound. The water felt warm as blood to Noel's hand. He strained eyes and ears against the night. His lively mind made him pictures of hidden things—of slimy logs mud-anchored far beneath him, and great eels as thick as a man's wrist squirming in oozy hollows, and dead things water-logged and slowly drifting between the surface and the stream's bed, and his old master Pod Reward footing it down to the brink of the current with no more sound than a padded lynx.

But as the brandy had brightened his inner vision and sharpened his senses, so had it steadied his nerves and toughened his heart. He kept the canoe fair in her course ; but in his anxiety to hear he ceased his guttural song. And he stared wide-eyed at the darkness on his right.

What was that ? Did not the unseen water stir and whisper against the varnished canvas ? Yes, yes, something was moving in the blackness on the right ! A musk-rat or a fisher or a man—who could say ? The sound it made was no more than the ghost of sound. But the slim canoe felt the touch of that soft and furtive motion, and Noel felt the thrill of the canoe.

And that ! The canoe shivered from bow to stern, all the length of her polished gunnels. And she dipped a little, settling her narrow out water in the black stream. Noel tested her with a twist of the paddle. She did not answer it. Something had her by the bow.

Noel's mouth felt very dry and he wet his lips with his tongue. His heart thumped in him so that he felt it, and he heard it like the drumming of a cock-partridge. He gripped the paddle against a gunnel with his left hand and felt down and forward with his right hand. The canoe was quivering now with the sinister movements of the silent and unseen passenger. There came a tinkling of falling drops of water to the Maliseet's ears. Again he moistened his lips with his tongue, his breath whistled in his wind-pipe.

His fingers found what they were feeling for and closed

on the smooth grip just behind the big hammers. He lifted the gun slowly, drawing it to him as he lifted. The muzzle seemed, for a moment, to be stuck to the bottom of the canoe. A sweat of horror broke out on his face. Ah! it was clear. But the other, the madman whom he could not see who was even now within a few feet of him, might spring at any moment—might even now be crouched for the spring.

With his left hand Noel brought the paddle inboard, across the gunnels. Then, quick as thought, he raised the heavy piece to his shoulder with both hands, held her steady for an instant straight along the canoe, drew back both hammers with his thumb and pressed both triggers.

The rod of yellow flame stabbed far into the darkness; the smashing roar of the explosion shook the heavy night and set the birds in the black woods flapping and piping; the recoil nearly dislocated Noel's shoulder and sent the canoe plunging backward, staggering like a wounded thing.

Noel let fall the gun and snatched up a paddle. He gave a back-stroke with all his strength. The canoe answered in a flash. The bow was clear. He darted the paddle forward once more. The canoe was empty. Then he span her up stream and strained to the paddle as he had never strained to any labour before in all his long life.

Noel did not relax his efforts to attain an impossible speed until the glow of the camp-fires was red and full in his sight. Then his muscles seemed to melt of a sudden to water and his lungs to turn to dry ashes, and

the strokes of his paddle became as feeble as the wing-beats of an exhausted bird. He touched shore at last and staggered forward over the bars and out of the canoe. He fell; and he continued to lie where he fell until Tom Snicken found him half an hour later.

Tom carried a lantern. He aroused Noel Sabatis, who looked very wan and sick in the dim shine of the lantern.

"Anything doing?" asked Tom kindly. "Any excitement?"

Noel laid a finger on his lip, then shook his head.

"You look all in," said Tom. "Come up to the fire now and have some hot tea. I'll pull the canoe up and send Amos down later to carry it the rest of the way up."

He put a hand on the bow of the canoe, only to withdraw it as sharply as if he had burned it. He stooped and held it to the light of the lantern, palm upward, and stared at it.

"Blood!" he said.

He raised the lantern so that the light fell inside the canoe. The gunnels and curved ribs forward were spotted and streaked with blood. He turned and cocked an eyebrow at Noel.

"B'ar," said the Maliseet. "B'ar come into canoe. Shoot um quick."

"And you did right, old son," said Tom. "If any bear more than another deserved a handful of scrap-iron, it was that old bear. But I think we'd better not say anything about it."

" You bet," agreed Noel.

So they washed the bow of the canoe thoroughly before pulling her up into the bushes.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MAJOR'S OUTWARD TRIP

AT an early hour of the morning following Noel's secret expedition, Major Wallace awoke Tom Snicken where the latter lay asleep in his blankets beside one of the subsided fires. Tom sat up briskly at the first touch of the Major's hand and looked clear-eyed into the Major's face.

"You do look hipped, sir!" he exclaimed. "Haven't you slept?"

"Not for several nights," returned Archer. "If I doze off for a moment I'm back there in that God-forsaken crater, between sudden death and madness, between our lines and theirs, between the machine-guns. You have seen the place, Tom. I lived in it. I lived on the water and rations of dead men—of my own men. One of them was my best friend, a subaltern named Willison. He had been hit in the face by a chunk of H.E. shell—but I took his cigarettes from his pocket after he had been dead four days. It is all coming back to me, clear as if it had happened yesterday. For

months, for years, my brain was blank of it—but now it has come back and I am afraid to sleep. I lived with forty dead men for a week—for eight days—our fellows and Germans. I had done in five with my own hands—and I knew them. Oh, yes, it was a great fight. I got hit in two places. Those craters—and mine particularly—were kept under all sorts of fire for eight days, day and night; and so no one could come out to bury the dead. And I couldn't get back to our lines—even if I had known which were ours. It was all forgotten—but now I remember. My God! . . . Now it is up to me to forget—but I can't forget here. I must go out, back to noise and excitement, and look for something that will help me to forget. I am in a funk, Tom—a blue funk."

"Don't you believe it, sir," replied Tom. "You are run down a bit, that is all. You need a tonic and a change of air. I know something about it, sir, for I was left out once myself, on the Somme—but only for thirty-six hours. Have you tried old Jessie's medicine?"

"Yes. She gave me long drinks of it last night and the night before. It made me sleepy—but it didn't make me forget in my dreams. I am afraid Gluskap didn't think of a case like mine when he created that medicine. I'll go out to-day, I think. Amos can take me to the village and bring the canoe back. But what had I better do when I get to town? Shall I work hard or play hard, Tom?"

"Wade right into trouble, sir. Then you'll be so busy with the present that you'll forget the past. If

you had to work for your living this business of prescribing for you would be much simpler. If you haven't other troubles of your own, then jump into someone else's troubles. That is what Sir John did, as far as I can gather the facts of his case. Or fall in love, sir."

"I have tried that. Yes, I'll try it again, you may be sure. So far, I have done all the falling; and it hasn't been a success. If it ever works both ways I think my memories will cease to bother me. In the meantime, I'll look around for other people's troubles to get mixed up with. Have you any troubles for me to adopt, Tom?"

"None, sir. Not enough to make you forget your dinner. My only sister is married to a plumber who calls himself a sanitary engineer and my only mother lives with them. My old man died quick and patriotically at Ypres. All the girls I have been engaged to, at one time and another, are married to better men than me. And the Captain is well and happy—so there you are, sir. You'll have to look farther than me."

"Tom, if ever you need another job or another friend, come to me."

Archer Wallace did not go out that day, after all, for Sir John de la Reward cornered him and placed before him a recently perfected plan of a great expedition, with maps drawn from memory and hearsay.

"I have wanted to do it for years," said the knight, "but couldn't until my daughter's future was somewhat settled. I was on the edge of this country ten years

ago. Hundreds of square miles of it are unknown to any white man. It is not a bad climate ; and I have heard vague reports of the natives bringing out gold."

Archer was interested immediately and asked for particulars ; and as Sir John detailed the plans his interest increased. There was promise of work and excitement enough to bring forgetfulness.

Archer set out for Plaster Rock next day, with Amos Dingle. At low water a bar of grey pebbles suns its back about fifty yards below the mouth of Fisher Creek in the main stream. As Archer's canoe rounded into Tobique, Archer saw something dark awash at the upper edge of the bar that caught eye and mind alike with a peculiar and particular air of significance. He spoke over his shoulder and drew the guide's attention to the thing.

" Looks like something dead," said Amos. " It aint a log, anyhow. It may be a moose calf or a deer."

" It's a man," said Archer, a few seconds later.

He was right. It had been a man, sure enough.

" That's old Pod Reward," said Amos. " Some one has sure blown the stuffin' out of him ; and no great harm done neither, sez I. And the fishes hev been at him. Now who done that, d'ye suppose ? "

" It's done, anyway ; and the result is not pleasant to look at," replied the Major. " It is up to us to bury him, I think."

" Sure thing, sir—to bury him deep so's he won't wash up and go adrift agin for some fool warder to find

him and start investigations. I guess Mr. Reward don't want all his father's past dug up and talked about. I wouldn't if that old devil was my father. We'll tow him ashore, sir, and dig him a proper deep grave with our paddles and heap rocks atop of it."

It was easier said than done—but they accomplished the heavy and unpleasant task at last. They re-embarked and paddled for a long way in silence. Archer felt very low, for Pod Reward had reminded him with shocking vividness of the very things he wanted to forget.

" Maybe you'd best write a line to Mr. Reward and tell him about it, sir," said Amos. " Tell him how we found him dead in the main river ; but I reckon it wouldn't do no good to say how he looked or what had killed him. Just tell him how the old rip-dolliger is dead and buried. It will be an all-fired relief to him, I guess. It sure would be to me if he was my father."

" I'll do it," said Archer.

He kept his promise three nights later, writing the letter to James Reward in his own library in his own flat in New York. He did not mention the elopement of Miss Reward. He was already feeling better, and had slept through the night before without remembering. Having sealed the letter to James and sent it to be posted, he lay back to think about the expedition of scientific investigation and exploration of which he had promised to become an important unit in the early days of September. Sir John, Bob Sayle, a medical man not yet selected and Archer himself were to be the white

men of the party. Their intention was to be kept secret from Ian MacLean, the mighty hunter, for his idea of an expedition into a tropical wilderness was of being carried in a hammock and of now and again being handed a loaded gun for discharge against something that had been driven up in front of him.

Archer was about to search his shelves for a book on South America when the telephone rang.

"That you, Major?" asked a familiar voice.

"Right you are. Who is speaking?"

"Peter, as ever was. Rang up on the chance that you had been scared out of the woods by this time. Have the others cleared out yet?"

"They are still there, awaiting the return of your father-in-law, you inconsiderate young ass. Why did you do it like that?—and what on earth was she thinking of?"

"She knows him better than you do, old dear. We are heading for the bush to-morrow, so's to be on hand to welcome him back to the home of his fathers. Alice thinks he'll be able to bear up against the blow better up there, in those peculiar surroundings, than in this commonplace town. Where did you address your wedding present to?"

"So you haven't seen him?"

"I saw him on the street this morning; but I saw him first—so you can bet he didn't see me at all. He looked to me as if he had heard the glad news and was on the war-path with his congratulations. Had anybody been sneak enough to write to him about it?"

"Not to my knowledge. Why don't you and the poor deluded young woman come around and tell me your troubles?"

"We'll be around in twenty minutes—but we haven't any troubles."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RETURN OF ALICE AND PETER

CAPTAIN ROBERT SAYLE, M.C., late Essex Regiment, who had recently inherited ten thousand dollars instead of six millions from his father's estate and who, yet more recently, had been stabbed through the neck with a poisoned knife, sat in his tent on Fisher Creek and knew himself to be the most fortunate man in the world. He said as much, and more, to Tom Snicken, who sat in the doorway of the tent and sewed buttons on a shirt in his usual thorough manner. He figured it out in a notebook.

"Snick, you would suppose that I am the possessor of a profession, would you," he said.

"You are a soldier," returned Tom. "You know that game from both ends to the middle."

"But I mean a profession that a man could support a wife on."

"No, sir, I wouldn't suppose that. What is it called?"

"I am an entomologist. When I was very young I chased butterflies because their coloured wings fascinated me; when I was idle I studied them at Oxford, at Paris and at Vienna—not the kind of butterflies that you are thinking of, Snick; and when I was bored I lectured about them for six months and was paid for doing it. My collection of butterflies and moths of the British Isles, which is now stored away in London, is worth seven hundred pounds and cost me a thousand. My paper entitled 'London Moths,' which was read before the Society of English Entomologists, of which I am a fellow, brought about the death of an old and second-rate scientist who stayed out all night in a London fog in the hope of disproving one of my statements and caught cold instead. So you see, Snick, I wasn't altogether a young ass in the old days when I had more money than I needed. I qualified for the job of entomologist with The de la Reward Expedition to the Rio Santos; and that will be a fine job."

"What will my job be on that expedition, sir?" asked Tom.

"I discussed that with Sir John last night. He had planned for only four, including the M.O., but when I explained to him that you had to come along he agreed with me. You are to be Ordnance Officer and Assistant Transport Officer."

"That's promotion, sir—but I'd rather be General Staff, of course. Who puts up all the money, if I may ask?"

"Sir John stands for two-fifths of it, Major Wallace for the same, and I do the balance."

" If you don't happen to have it handy when you need it, sir, I am quite certain that my brother-in-law the plumber—— "

" Bless you for the thought, old Snick, but don't run away with the idea that I'm in any way hipped just because my father didn't give me a few millions of dollars. Snick, I am the richest man in the world—and I have some money too. You remember how I used to buy pictures every chance I got—always from the men I liked ? That was an old game of mine. I didn't know much about pictures, but I knew a lot about men—so I bought everything that was offered me by the fellows I liked, just to cheer them up and get rid of money I didn't know what else to do with. Those were all first-rate artists as well as first-rate men. I have described my lot to Sir John, who seems to know everything, and he says it is worth thousands and increasing in value every day. So there you are, Snick. That comes of never lighting three fags with one match."

Amos Dingle returned to camp from Plaster Rock with word of the discovery and burial of Pod Reward's body. Every one except Noel Sabatis expressed decent concern at the news of Pod's death ; and all, including Noel, felt a great relief.

The party on Fisher Creek now consisted of old Jessie Sabatis and her son Noel, Sir John de la Reward and his daughter June, Captain Sayle, Ian MacLean, and Thomas Snicken, and Amos Dingle when he wasn't paddling to and from Plaster Rock. The plans of Sir John and the other outsiders we already know in the rough. They remained on Fisher Creek only in consider-

ation for James Reward, and perhaps a little in curiosity concerning Alice and Peter. Old Jessie and her son saw their future plain and comfortable. Noel had money—several small bags full of it—which he had dug out of the ground in Pod Reward's clearing; and Jessie had two hundred dollars which James Reward had given her, and fifty dollars from Bob Sayle, and a tiny gold watch from June de la Reward. They would go to the reservation on the big river before autumn and there live in luxury with their relatives. They would eat well, three times every day of the year, and never lack tobacco for their pipes of blackened clay. Jessie would do a little doctoring; and Noel would gather drift-wood, and split the kindlings, and perhaps set a few traps for musquash if he felt inclined that way. They would be comfortable and happy enough.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Warren arrived at the clearing at three o'clock of a fine afternoon, with a basket of Widow Carson's " riz " biscuits and home-made preserves and Washington pie amidships. They had passed the night with the widow and set her in a flutter of romance that would last her the balance of her earthly life. They had brought her their photographs in silver frames and a gold necklace from New York. Her delight and admiration had done much to hearten them for the rest of their journey.

Alice was the first to step ashore; and that was natural, as she had occupied the bow of the canoe. But she was the first to climb the bank and make known their arrival. Peter followed slowly and sheepishly, carrying the wonderful food of the widow's cooking.

June was the first to reach the bride at the top of the bank. She put her arms around her, kissed her warmly and said, "You sly little idiot, you should be spanked." Alice was charmed with the greeting, called June a dear, kissed her twice and said that she hoped that she and Bob had stopped running around and caught each other at last. Then Sir John appeared from his tent with his hands full of plans and calculations concerning the Rio Santos, and, with an absent-minded air, kissed them both. He then advanced to the groom, shook his hand and relieved him of his basket of provisions.

"You are married, I suppose," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied Peter. "We were married at Plaster Rock—on our way out. Parson's name is Green."

"What does James think of it?"

"We don't know. Alice says she can handle him —and I believe her. We haven't written to him. We think our best plan is to dig in here and wait for him."

"Undoubtedly," agreed Sir John. "James may be a very formidable fellow on his own stamping-ground, but I think he is harmless enough in the woods. By the way, what's in this basket?"

The long youth showed it. The knight helped himself to a big section of Washington pie and returned to the tent and his calculations.

Alice soon found an opportunity for a private talk with Bob.

"You must know that I am the person named by your father in that secret letter," she said.

"That is what I have always believed," said Bob.

"Father never told me in so many words—but of course that is it," she said. "It is one of the stupidest things I ever heard of, and the most unjust. I told Peter about it as soon as we began to know each other, and he said that all I have to do is to give it back to you. I was afraid I should have to keep it, because it was left to me in a will."

"But I don't want it."

"Neither do I. It is yours by right, and you must take it. Your father intended it for you, Bob."

"No, I don't want it or need it, Alice. Can't you and Peter use it? Five millions odd would set you two up very nicely in housekeeping."

"Please don't talk like that, or I'll think you suspect me of—of wanting your money. You know that is not so, Bob. Please say that you will take it."

"When you get it, I'll help you to give it away. How will that do? We can build and endow a hospital with it—the Reward-Sayle Hospital. Isn't that a bright idea?"

"Peter suggested something of the kind. He seemed to know that you wouldn't take it—though I can't see why, considering it is as much yours as if he had put it into your hands."

"My dear girl, that is just what he did not do, whatever his intentions may have been. He put it into your hands. But what does it matter? Neither of us wants it, and Peter doesn't want it, so we'll do something big and fine with it together, to our everlasting glory—when we get it."

"Bob you are a dear!—but why do you say that?—'when we get it'—and in that tone of voice? Surely you don't think that I am not the person named in the letter. I know for sure that I am the one your father was always pestering you about."

"I am sure that you are the heiress—but where five millions and nine hundred and ninety thousands of dollars are concerned, seeing is believing. It is easier to write about them than to produce. We'll ask your father to show it to us when we see him; and we won't worry about it in the meantime."

The next few days passed happily and peacefully on Fisher Creek, in spite of a little rain and a return of black-flies in force. Peter and Alice forgot, for hours together, the interview that lay before them. Sir John went back to his *Family Descent* after he had carried the plans for the expedition as far as possible with the information at hand. June and Bob went fishing up and down stream, without fear of old Pod or anything in the world. They were to be married in London, in the church that was nearest the spot where they had first seen each other—and that would be St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. They planned their wedding day, and the few London days to follow, and the long voyage to Brazil. They imagined the city at the mouth of the Rio Santos and the very house in which June would reside while the expedition was up country. Sir John knew the city and a number of English people resident there. They even pictured the return of the expedition, and June looking out from the green gallery of her yellow walled house and seeing Bob hastening along the white

street with a sack of gold dust on his shoulder. They looked into the future with the eager eyes and happy imaginations of children; but as the evening shadows lengthened across the wilderness they always harked back to the wonder and magic of the past.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DISINHERITANCE

AMOS DINGLE brought Mr. James Reward up from Plaster Rock. Amos, who had taken the mighty hunter out, had met the millionaire there quite by chance. James, who had lost weight and regained it on Fisher Creek, had lost it again. More than that, he had lost his ruddy, up-country colour. The guide found him a cheerless companion. Ten miles of the trip were behind them when they drew near to the bar which lies, at low water, just below the pool which is caused by the entrance of the Creek into the Tobique.

"Did the Major write to you?" asked Amos.

"Yes, he wrote to me," replied James in a dull voice.

"It was agin the upper side of that there bar we found him," said the guide. "We buried him up yonder, deep as a well an' with plenty of rocks atop of him."

"You did right," said James, the tone of his voice as dull as before. "I only wish he had been buried a year

ago—in which case I should not have—should not now be the fool that I am. It was madness! Amos, what sort of sons have you, if any? Do you trust them? If you do, stop it. Don't."

"I have one son livin'—and you can betcher sweet life I trust him! My sons were men, mister; and they proved it—and two of 'em got killed provin' it."

The millionaire did not have anything to say to that, and the woodsman did not add anything to it. They continued the journey in silence. Amos had intended to ascertain, by a few leading questions, if James was aware of his daughter's escapade; and if he was not aware, to break it to him gently; and if he was, to ease his mind about it. But the millionaire's question about his sons had pricked his temper. Who the devil was James Reward, whose ears had been filled with the clink of dollars instead of with the snap of bullets in the air, to ask him if he trusted his sons? High and angry pride, and grief suddenly mishandled and ready to find relief in oaths and blows, continued to heat Amos Dingle's deep chest for an hour.

James Reward went ashore heavily, climbed the bank like an old man and smiled painfully at those who welcomed him back. Alice was terrified by his appearance and manner.

"Are you ill?" she asked. "What is the matter? Is it my fault?"

"I am not ill; and whatever the matter is, it is not your fault, kid," answered James, affectionately. "It could never have been your fault. I want to talk to you and Bob—and John had better hear what I have to say, too. Bring Bob along, dear. John, will you come

this way for a few minutes—as a member of this precious family."

He led the way to the knight's tent and sat down on the empty box. Sir John followed him. Alice and Bob followed close on the knight's heels. Alice looked afraid and conscience-striken.

James told them all of the extraordinary clause in the will of the late Robert N. Sayle, and of the sealed letter. He told it briefly and clearly, in a low voice, without comment, gazing at the ground as he talked. There was nothing new in this to Alice or Bob. Sir John did not say anything, but looked vastly puzzled.

"The person named in the letter is my daughter Alice," said James lifting his head and looking gloomily at the knight.

Sir John glanced at Alice.

"It is a great deal of money," he remarked calmly.

"I knew it; and so did Bob," said Alice. "We have talked about it again and again—and he doesn't want it, and I won't have it."

"It was your money, nevertheless," said her father. "Yours by law and Bob's by right—and I am responsible to you for it, in the eyes of the law, and before the living and the dead. It was trusted to me by the man who trusted me, and never found me unworthy of his trust, for twenty-five years before his death. Instead of acting when I should have acted, I came up here to show the old madman who was my father what a great person I had grown to be in spite of my miserable childhood and his cruel treatment. It was vanity that brought me here. And I left my business which was

also the business of thousands of people who trusted me and believed in me, in the hands of my sons. That is what I did—at a time when the business of the whole world was unsettled. I trusted my sons, of course; but that was my fault, not theirs. I had taught them all that they knew of business. I considered them safe and cautious men. They had not shown any desire to risk their skins; and how should I know that they were brave fellows with money—two of the bravest in New York."

Alice embraced him. He freed her arms from his neck and pushed her gently but firmly aside.

"Wait," he said. "Let me finish my story—and then you can hug me if you want to."

"Why not cut it short?" suggested Bob. "Let us know the worst."

"The worst," said James. "It is all that. When I reached New York we were tottering, we were going down, everything was sliding, we were within a few hours of ruin and our friends were on us like a pack of wolves."

"We?" queried Bob. "Do you mean the firm of Sayle and Sear?"

"That is what I mean. The boys had seen a way of snatching fifty millions of dollars that didn't belong to them out of the market—and that vision cost them ten millions that didn't belong to them. I saved the firm's name; and that is all there is left of it. I couldn't have done even that much but for your disinheritance, Bob. I threw that in and played it for all it was worth. It saved the name that my sons had gambled with."

"Are you ruined?" asked Alice.

" I am as I was twenty-five years ago ; and you are not an heiress. I held on to our country home—but that is yours. And my books and your mother's books and jewels and car are yours. That is the best I can do for you, kid. I am sorry."

James stared at the ground and the others stared at him. Alice wept silently.

" This is very unfortunate," said Sir John. " I had no idea that such things could happen so suddenly to millions of money."

James glanced at him dully.

" When fools go mad, anything can happen to money," he replied. " But that money was not made by playing the market. Sayle and Sear were not gamblers ; and now they are nothing."

" But if you are square with the world, why not start again ? " said the knight. " You have the knowledge, the ability and the name—and I think I can find you a little capital, my dear fellow."

" No," said the other. " I owe nearly six millions and I am down and out. If Alice does not send me to jail, I'll go farming and try to forget it."

At that, Alice rushed at him again and again clasped him in her arms. This time she held him tight. Sir John and Bob slipped hastily out of the tent. Bob went straight to Peter Warren, who stood twenty yards away looking very anxious and young and lanky.

" James and your wife are having a little talk about money and other family matters, and if I were you I'd butt in on them in a few minutes," said Bob. " Now is the time to tell him all about it. I think you'll find his come-back hasn't much weight behind it to-day."

Peter stood just outside the tent for several minutes, giving ear to sobs and broken whispers from within. He almost wished himself back on the field of battle, with the guns of Mr. Stoke—but not quite, for Alice would not be there. He tried to give himself courage to enter the tent by recalling to mind every exceptionally courageous thing he had done in Flanders and France, only to realize that there were several kinds of courage and that he was shy of one kind. Then he had to cheer himself with the thought that he was a married man, a landed proprietor in Nova Scotia, and the part owner of a flourishing mill, and that the lady within was his own lawful wedded wife. There was cheer in that thought, but no inspiration to enter the tent. At last he drew a deep breath, ducked his head and stumbled within.

Alice, who sat on her father's knees, looked up at him with a tear-stained face and shining eyes. James looked at him with a fixed and gloomy regard.

"Is there anything I can do?" asked Peter, in a shaking voice.

"Who the devil are you?" returned James.

Peter gasped and looked to his wife for help—but she did nothing more helpful than smile at him through her tears.

"I—I am Peter Warren—as you know, sir," said he.

"I know that you had better clear out of this," said James. "This tent is now occupied, and this young lady is at present engaged."

"That young lady——" began Peter.

"Get out!" interrupted the other. "Are you crazy—or drunk?"

Peter smiled. He felt perfectly normal now—even a little better than normal.

"You had better keep your temper, Mr. Reward," he said, "or I may lose mine—a thing I should be very sorry to do under the circumstances—considering who you are and all that sort of thing. Sit still! Keep your hair on! Alice, why are you crying? Has he said anything to hurt you?"

Alice turned and hid her face against her father's shoulder. James sat like a man of stone, staring at the lanky youth in profound amazement, unable to speak, his lost millions forgotten.

"If you have anything unpleasant to say, you will oblige me by saying it to me," continued Peter. "Remember that in the future—and if I find you again saying anything to her to make her cry I'll knock your—I may forget who you are and do something disrespectfully."

James raised the girl's face from his shoulder and looked at her.

"Is your friend mad?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Can you tell me anything about him, kid?"

"Yes, dear. I married him," she said.

"And I married her," said Peter.

"You!" exclaimed Reward, in a voice in which rage cracked through the duller note of incredulity. He trembled with his effort at self-control. "Well, you are fooled," he said, bitterly. "Alice, tell him about it."

"He knows," she replied. "At least he knows that I didn't take a single dollar of that money. Peter, he has lost all his money."

"I am sorry," said Peter. "I am pretty well fixed, sir, in a small way; and if a few thousands would help you I think I could raise them."

James shoved his daughter off his knee.

"Go away, both of you," he said. "Run away and play, and leave me to smoke a cigar in peace."

CHAPTER XXX

THE financial downfall of James Reward inspired Sir John to make a long hop forward in his book and write the last chapter of *Family Descent.* Even as he wrote the last word of it, Bob Sayle set to work at pulling up the pegs of his tent.

Noel Sabatis had found the canoe which Pod Reward had salvaged and hidden in the bushes, and Amos had borrowed another from a friend of his on the Tobique ; and so the whole party, including the Maliseets, were able to make the outward trip together as far as Plaster Rock. There the outsiders parted from Amos Dingle and old Jessie and Noel.

Upon arriving in New York, James and Alice and Peter Warren went one way and Sir John and June and Bob Sayle another. The Reward party went home, the de la Reward party to a quiet hotel. Sir John telephoned word of their arrival to Major Archie Wallace and then made inquiries concerning sailings to Liverpool.

The Major and Ian MacLean called on the de la Rewards immediately after dinner. Archer's eyes looked better, and he told Bob that he was sleeping soundly and dreamlessly every second night. The mighty hunter, too, appeared changed. His features were unaltered and he was neither fatter nor leaner in face or body; but he did not look exactly like the Ian of old. The change was in the expression of his face; yes, and in his manner. He listened and talked less than of old. He did not mention a lion or tiger once during the half hour of his call. Archer spoke openly before him of the expedition to Rio Santos, and he did not suggest his joining it by look or word. A month ago he would have taken command of the expedition by force. Fisher Creek had taught him his true importance in the scheme of things.

* * * * * * *

Captain Robert Sayle, M.C., awoke in the bedroom of his modest flat off Charing Cross Road, in the city of London, and found the sunshine streaming in between the half-drawn curtains of his open window. He glanced at his watch and hopped out of bed. The door opened and Thomas Snicken looked in.

"Breakfast is up, sir, and your bath is ready," he said. "Look alive, sir, for ten-thirty is zero hour."

Bob entered the bathroom ; and Tom, in the sitting-room, heard something like this :—

" Major White of Bedford, umpty umpty wrench
Never lost a shilling, never lost a trench,
Fought his blessed brigadier, fought the bloomin' Hun,
Lost his blessed life because he wouldn't hide or run.

" Major White of Bedford left a lonely wife
Safe behind in Bedford, far from noise and strife.
Umpty umpty brigadier home to have some fun,
Lost his umpty wife because she wouldn't hide or run."

" Sounds like old times," said Tom ; " but I wish he would learn a new one. When I get my papers as Ordnance Officer all straight I'll suggest it to him." Then he knocked on the door and cried, " Double up, sir, double up. You've still to shave and eat and dress."

Forty minutes later, Bob and Tom issued into the narrow street that led them into Charing Cross Road. Both wore hats of the tallest and brightest, and coats of the slenderest and blackest and waistcoats of the whitest and trousers of the creasedest. Each wore a white rosebud in the lapel of his faultless coat. Tom carried a plain gold ring in one pocket and an assortment of Treasury and Bank of England notes in another.

When they came into the open they saw the awning above the heads of the hurrying people, and as they drew nearer they saw the red carpet that crossed the pavement and climbed the steps to the door of the church. The bells were ringing as they reached the carpet, and gleaming cars were rolling up, and people

in the kindly, curious crowd looked at the two and smiled.

"Be careful you don't fumble the ring when I pass it to you," whispered Tom.

THE END

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